

THE STRAITS TIMES

World
Illegal
hotels
pop up
in
Penang
A8



Home
Singapore's
moon mission B3



Sport
Fencer medals
again for
Singapore C6

Life What's behind the high rate
of childhood myopia D1&2



Business Consider opportunities in Asean, says EDB chief C1 • Opinion US foreign policy after Trump AI5

Malaysia's King abdicates in unprecedented move

Sultan Muhammad V's
resignation ends
weeks of speculation
over ruler's future

Shannon Teoh
Malaysia Bureau Chief
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's King has abdicated in an unprecedented move, ending weeks of speculation about his future that had heightened after a recent meeting of the country's nine state rulers.

The National Palace said yesterday that Sultan Muhammad V of Kelantan had resigned as the 15th King, or Supreme Ruler of the federation.

"His Majesty has prepared to return to Kelantan Darul Naim to be with the state government and especially the people of Kelantan to safeguard and develop Kelantan for the betterment of the public," the Comptroller of the Royal Household Wan Ahmad Dahlan Ab Aziz said in a statement issued by Istana Negara.

Malaysia's nine Malay state rulers elect a King among themselves every five years, usually on a rotational basis. But Sultan Muhammad's resignation comes just two years after he ascended to the post in December 2016. The Palace said the Kelantan monarch had informed the other rulers of his decision.

His reign ended in controversial fashion after he took a two-month break "following treatment" beginning Nov 2. It was reported during this time that the 49-year-old had married Russian beauty queen Oksana Voevodina, 25, in Moscow.

During that time, Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah was Acting King until Dec 31. Just days later, the Council of Rulers held a "rare and unscheduled" meeting, and speculation spread quickly that Sultan Muhammad would



Malaysia's King Sultan Muhammad V at the Trooping of Colours ceremony, in conjunction with his official birthday, in Putrajaya last September. His resignation as the 15th King of Malaysia comes just two years after he ascended to the post in December 2016. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

step down soon.

That has now come to pass and The Straits Times understands that Sultan Nazrin will continue as Acting King before a new monarch is picked by the Council.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had written in a blog post titled "Rule of Law" last Wednesday that all Malaysians, including the royalty, were bound by the laws of the land.

"There is no provision which exempts anyone from the rule of law. For the rulers, there is a special court, but the laws are the same as the laws applicable to ordinary citizens. The rulers too must

respect the laws," he wrote. "It is disturbing to see blatant breaches of the law being perpetrated in the mistaken belief that immunity has somehow been accorded."

However, his posting did not make specific reference to any offence. While nothing bars a monarch from marrying a foreigner, ST has learnt that other rulers were uneasy with the possible coronation of Ms Voevodina.

Asked about the King's status on Friday, Tun Dr Mahathir said he had not received any official information and had heard only rumours.

Sultan Muhammad was the first

king without an official queen.

It was also during his reign that the Barisan Nasional's unbroken rule over Malaysia ended after last year's May 9 elections.

Although he swore in Dr Mahathir as Premier late on May 10, he had first invited Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to his palace earlier in the day.

He then met with leaders from Pakatan Harapan for hours, leading to speculation over whether he would refuse to install Dr Mahathir, who was the ruling coalition's agreed choice for PM.

Yesterday, former prime minis-

ter Najib Razak expressed his gratitude to the Sultan for his service, while Kelantan Menteri Besar Ahmad Yakob said the state government has accepted the Sultan's decision to resign.

Sultan Muhammad's final decree to Malaysians as King was to "continue together in maintaining unity, tolerance and join hands in bearing the responsibility for this sovereign country so that Malaysia remains peaceful and harmonious".

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4

Johor gets S'pore help on water

Singapore has supplied additional treated water to Malaysia, at Johor's request, after production there was disrupted due to pollution.

In response to media queries, national water agency PUB said yesterday that an additional six million gallons per day (mgd) of treated water was supplied between Jan 2 and Jan 4.

PUB added that production at Johor's water plants was disrupted recently due to pollution in the river catchment. PUB's Johor River Waterworks was not affected by the incident.

The 6 mgd was on top of the 16 mgd that Singapore usually supplies Johor.

PUB added that it has supplied the additional treated water on "a goodwill basis" at 50 sen per 1,000 gallons.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A5

New head for Taiwan's DPP


Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) yesterday elected former Cabinet secretary-general Cho Jung-tai as its new chairman.

The post was vacated by President Tsai Ing-wen in November after the party suffered a string of defeats in local elections, fuelled by a backlash over her domestic reforms and deteriorating ties with China.

DPP acting chairman Lin Yu-chang said Mr Cho, a moderate consensus candidate, took 24,699 votes, or 72.6 per cent, while pro-independence rival You Ying-lung garnered 9,323 votes.

Analysts say the party leadership vote will set the tone for the run-up to next year's presidential election.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6



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WATCH FEATURED SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY

10 must-reads for today

1 Rakhine's rehab in peril
Fighting is threatening to escalate between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group seeking self-determination in Rakhine state. The worsening conflict could complicate the ongoing rehabilitation efforts as the state struggles to recover from the violence that caused some 700,000 refugees to flee two years ago. **TOP OF THE NEWS A7**



Ethnic Rakhine people, who fled from an area of conflict, at a temporary camp in Kyauk Taw township, in northern Rakhine state, yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

2 Malaysian King abdicates
The Malaysian King, Sultan Muhammad V, has abdicated in an unprecedented move, ending weeks of speculation about his future that had heightened after a recent meeting of the country's nine sultans. His resignation comes just two years after he ascended to the post in December 2016. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Call to promote trade route
Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing has called for more to be done to attract users to the new land-and-sea trade corridor that connects western China to South-east Asia. He said coordination among China's western provinces was key in enhancing trade flows and achieving greater regional integration. **WORLD A9**

4 Trump Mid-East plan a flop
When United States President Donald Trump took office, he vowed to bring peace to the Israelis and Palestinians. His son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Jason Greenblatt have been working on a peace plan but so far, they have little to show. **WORLD A14**

5 America First will continue
American foreign policy is likely to continue its isolationist trajectory, even without Mr Donald Trump. Whoever wins the 2020 election will find it difficult to reverse Mr Trump's America First policies, says global affairs correspondent Jonathan Eyal (below). **OPINION A15**



6 More protection with Act
Vulnerable adults will be better protected under a new Act. The Vulnerable Adults Act grants powers such as a protection order against abusers and provides another avenue for social workers who face uncooperative family members. **HOME B1**

7 KrisFlyer glitch affects 280
The personal details of over 280 KrisFlyer members may have been seen by other customers due to a software bug on the Singapore Airlines website last Friday. Details may have included names and account numbers, and in seven cases, passport details. **HOME B2**

8 All eyes on US-China talks
Much attention this week will be on what commentators hope will be progress towards better United States-China trade relations, as the US government delegation will be in Beijing today to talk trade with China. **BUSINESS C3**

9 School on hold for Olympics
In a bid to qualify for the 2022 Winter Olympics, speed skater Trevor Tan will put his studies at the Singapore Sports School on hold for a year. He leaves today for Gyeonggi, South Korea, where he will train alongside two-time Olympic champion Kim A-lang. Trevor, 16, won the men's Junior B 1,000m final at the SEA Open Short Track trophy yesterday. **SPORT C8**

10 Hosting show and glamour
Taiwanese TV travel show host Marco Liao (below) insists that his job is not as glamorous as it seems, even if he does get to eat and play his way around the world. Liao was in town to promote the latest season of his hit travel programme, The Incredible Hidden Gems. **LIFE D5**



ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

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VIDEO
Homing in on tradition
Some South Koreans are building a new life in a mountainous region in north-western Seoul, where a small area has been earmarked for a cluster of hanok, or traditional Korean homes. <http://str.sg/o6Bu>



VIDEO
The way to lead
Mr Lee Tzu Yang, chairman of the Public Service Commission, talks about working in the civil service, the scholarship selection process and his impression of young Singaporeans. <http://str.sg/o6b8>

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Above: The education centre where Soo Jia He was accidentally locked inside. He had been left alone for around 10 minutes, say his parents, who rushed back to their office to find their son lying at the foot of the building.
Left: Prayers being performed at the site of the tragedy yesterday.
PHOTOS: LIANHE ZAOBAO, TIMOTHY DAVID

GRIEVING PARENTS

We don't know for sure how it happened, but all that does not matter now; the end result is still the same. Just like that, our son is gone. How are we going to be okay again?



MR SOO, father of the five-year-old boy, Soo Jia He.

Boy, 5, found dead at foot of block after being accidentally locked in

He is believed to have tried to escape through a window in parents' eighth-floor office

Cara Wong and Ng Huiwen

A five-year-old who was accidentally locked inside his parents' eighth-floor Woodlands Close office was found dead at the foot of the building on Saturday.

Soo Jia He, who had been left alone for around 10 minutes according to his parents, is believed to have attempted to escape through a window.
Jia He's mother, who gave her name only as Ms Hu, told Shin Min Daily News: "Our home is only a five-minute drive from the office. I

couldn't believe that when we rushed back to the office, we would see my son's body lying on the ground floor."
Ms Hu added that she noticed the office window was open when she returned to the scene.
She believed that her son could have fallen from the window in a panic, having witnessed their car driving away, a friend of the family told The Straits Times at the boy's wake yesterday.
The police said that they were

alerted to a fall-from-height case at 11 Woodlands Close at about 9pm. The boy was found lying motionless at the foot of the building and was pronounced dead by paramedics at the scene.
The police are investigating the unnatural death.
Chinese-language newspaper Shin Min Daily News reported that the boy's parents had taken him and his brother to their office that day, and he had fallen asleep while they did some work.

The couple run an education centre, though there were no lessons held on Saturday.
When it was time to leave, the boy's father switched off the lights in the office and they drove home with his older brother.
It was only when the couple arrived at the carpark of their home that they realised they had left their younger son behind.
When ST visited the building yesterday afternoon, candles and joss sticks had been placed near the acci-

dent site – following a ritual the parents had commissioned for their son earlier that day.
The boy was the youngest of the couple's four children and he was doted on dearly by everyone, said the boy's father, who wanted to be known only as Mr Soo.
They have a daughter, who is in secondary school, and two other sons, the older of whom is 18. The other is in primary school.
"It is a tragic accident that nobody could have foreseen," Mr Soo told ST at the boy's wake yesterday. He said that both he and his wife have not slept since the accident the day before.
He said: "We don't know for sure how it happened, but all that does not matter now; the end result is still the same. Just like that, our son is gone. How are we going to be okay again?"
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Commentary

Crisis averted with King's resignation

But with Malaysia's new monarch to be appointed in coming weeks, tensions could still arise between sultans and Mahathir government



Leslie Lopez

Regional Correspondent

A crisis for Malaysia's constitutional monarchy, involving the government as well as the rulers of the country's nine royal households, was averted yesterday with the unprecedented resignation of Kelantan Sultan Muhammad V as the king, or the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as he is officially called.

But the appointment of a new monarch in the coming weeks by the Conference of Rulers still leaves open the prospect of tensions between the sultans and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's government.

While agongs have died in office in the past, Sultan Muhammad's decision to quit before his term expires in end-2021 has pushed the constitutional monarchy into uncharted waters.

Senior administration officials close to the situation told The Straits Times that, based on royal protocol, Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak, who is currently deputy king, will be named acting agong until the decision on a new ruler is made in the coming weeks.

Under the rotation system, unique to Malaysia, the country's rulers choose a king from among themselves to reign for five years. Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang is slated to be the next king. But the 88-year-old sultan is reported to be ailing.

The Pahang ruler can abdicate in the coming days in favour of his son, Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, paving the way for the state's new ruler to be the agong.

It will be up to the Conference of Rulers, which will convene in the coming weeks, to decide on a new king.

Under the current rotation system, the next person in line for the position after Pahang's ruler is Johor's followed by Perak's.

Administration officials added that there are preliminary plans for Tun Dr Mahathir to meet Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar of Johor in the state capital, Johor Baru, this afternoon. The meeting will be watched closely because Dr Mahathir's relations with the Johor royal household have always been rocky.

These are turbulent times for the monarchy and Malaysian politics. Prior to yesterday's dramatic

announcement, tensions were already building over the position of Sultan Muhammad, 49, following persistent speculation that the other rulers were forcing him to resign due to the general unease among them over his recent reported marriage to a Russian model, Ms Oksana Voevodina, 25.

The simmering crisis among the rulers quickly stoked concerns that a potentially messy process of abdication could have serious repercussions for Malaysia, in particular, the country's already politically restive Malay community, who make up more than 60 per cent of the population.

Since independence in 1957, Malaysia's sultans have enjoyed a special role as protectors of Islam and champions of the Malay race, a position that has helped inculcate the community's political dominance in multiracial Malaysia. Public debate over the prerogatives of the royalty, including the hefty financial burden borne by the government to support each royal household, was long considered taboo.

All of this changed after Dr Mahathir assumed the premiership for the first time in 1981. During his 22 years in power, he locked horns with the royal houses on three separate occasions.

The first brush with the rulers came in 1983 when he sparked a constitutional crisis by seeking to remove the need for the King's assent to Bills approved by Parliament. That clash was settled with a compromise that set a 30-day waiting period for the King's approval, which, if not obtained, would still turn the Bill automatically into law.

Seven years later, as head of the then ruling United Malays National Organisation (Umno), Dr Mahathir pushed for and succeeded in establishing a code of conduct, which essentially prohibited the sultans from getting involved in

Administration officials added that there are preliminary plans for Tun Dr Mahathir to meet Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar of Johor in the state capital, Johor Baru, this afternoon. The meeting will be watched closely because Dr Mahathir's relations with the Johor royal household have always been rocky.



Left, from top: Under Malaysia's rotation system, Pahang's Sultan Ahmad Shah is slated to be the next king. But the 88-year-old is reported to be ailing, and he could abdicate in favour of his son, Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, paving the way for him to be the agong. The next in line after Pahang's ruler is Johor's Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar. It will be up to the Conference of Rulers to decide on a new king.

politics and strictly limited their rights to rule only on the advice of the prime minister and the appointed state chief ministers or menteri besar.

The third brush came in 1991 when the combative Dr Mahathir seized on the alleged thrashing of national field-hockey coach Douglas Gomez by then Sultan of Johor Mahmood Iskandar ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Ismail.

That episode, which sparked another constitutional crisis, was resolved after the government succeeded in removing the long-held immunity the sultans enjoyed from criminal prosecution. It also led to the establishment of a special court to prosecute any head of a royal household who violated the law.

The government's previous tense engagements with the royalty occurred when the majority of the Malays were firmly supportive of Umno. But the political landscape has changed dramatically with Umno losing its 60-year grip on power in the general election in May last year.

With the Malays deeply split, there are concerns that Umno and Parti Islam SeMalaysia, the country's dominant conservative Muslim opposition party, could take advantage of the simmering tensions among royalty to further undermine the appeal of the Dr Mahathir-led Pakatan Harapan coalition government in Putrajaya.

But a more sanguine view is that yesterday's development has shown that the Conference of Rulers is more than capable of dealing with its own problems.

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Sultan Muhammad V reportedly married former Miss Moscow Oksana Voevodina in November last year. Rumours began to swirl that the other rulers were not agreeable to her coronation as queen. PHOTO: EAST2WEST NEWS

Short but eventful tenure as Malaysia's 15th King

Shannon Teoh
Malaysia Bureau Chief
In Kuala Lumpur

Although Sultan Muhammad V made it through just two years of a five-year term as Malaysia's 15th King, the 49-year-old's tenure was one of the most eventful – not only did he preside over the country's first ever transition of power from the long-ruling Barisan Nasional, he also became the first King to abdicate from the federation's throne.

Born Tengku Muhammad Faris Petra ibni Tengku Ismail Petra in 1969, he was made Crown Prince of the state of Kelantan at the tender age of 10, and succeeded his father in 2010, when the latter was deemed incapacitated by illness after suffering a stroke in May the previous year.

Just four months later, the Oxford graduate dismissed his younger brother Tengku Muhammad Fakhry Petra from Kelantan's Succession Council, which is tasked with deciding on whether a new Sultan should be installed – all while his father was ward in Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital. Despite continuing intrigue

within the royal court of the north-eastern state, Sultan Muhammad V joined the Conference of Rulers in October 2010, signifying that his fellow rulers recognised him as Kelantan's head of state.

Prior to being elected King in 2016, he served as Malaysia's Deputy Supreme Ruler for five years. But he ascended the throne as the first King not to have an official Queen, as he had divorced his first wife Kongsadal Pipitpakdee, a southern Thai royal, in 2008.

In November last year, he took a two-month leave from duty "following treatment" but reports of a marriage later that month to Miss Moscow 2015 Oksana Voevodina, 25, began to spread across social media in Malaysia, although there was no official statement on the matter.

Rumours began to swirl that the other rulers were not agreeable to her coronation as queen. But this was only the latest in a string of disagreements with Malaysia's elite since the historic change of government on May 9.

Despite victors Pakatan Harapan (PH) having publicly agreed to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as its choice for prime minister, Sultan

Muhammad chose to give an audience first to Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

It was only after several press conferences reiterating PH's wish that Dr Mahathir return as premier having first served as head of government from 1981 to 2003, that the Kelantan ruler swore in the 92-year-old late on May 10.

In June, the government also faced a two-week delay in swearing in Attorney-General Tommy Thomas, as the candidate was not a Malay-Muslim. It was only after a late-night audience with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim – who is supposed to succeed Dr Mahathir according to a deal struck among PH leaders – that Sultan Muhammad acceded to the choice.

Dr Mahathir later claimed that the other state rulers had expressed to him that they disagreed with the delays in his installation as premier and in the swearing-in of Mr Thomas as the government's top lawyer.

Sultan Muhammad now returns to Kelantan to continue reigning over the state. He has, as yet, no heir.

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'Yellow vest' strife worsens with attack on French ministry

PARIS • The first "yellow vest" demonstration of the new year has reached a new level of violence as a government ministry building was attacked and the minister evacuated out the back door.

What started two months ago as a protest over petrol taxes has turned into a more general attack on the French government.

The minister, chief government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux, told French television that yellow vest protesters and "men dressed in black" – the so-called casseurs, or "breakers", who have latched on to the movement – commandeered a construction vehicle and broke down the door of the Left Bank building. They then entered a courtyard and broke several windows, he said.

The rare intrusion on Saturday – the last such attack on a government building by protesters was in 1999 – took place on a day of protests throughout France that started peacefully but degenerated into violence. Some 50,000 took part in yellow vest demonstrations all over France, officials said, up from the previous weekend's 29,000. Over 3,000 turned out in Paris.

The numbers were down sharply from the protest's first weeks, but still represent a significant national turnout, especially as a majority of French continue to support the movement, despite repeated outbreaks of violence.

The yellow vest movement, which takes its name from the hazard vests adopted by the protesters as a sign of economic distress, began as an outcry over rising fuel taxes and expanded into a broad campaign over money woes.

Near the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, police used tear gas and flash balls to block hundreds of protesters. A video posted on social media showed protesters fighting hand to hand with club-wielding police officers. Protesters dragged two officers to the ground and kicked them repeatedly, the video showed.

On the Champs-Elysees, which was closed to traffic for hours, protesters threw rocks at police and officers used water cannon to disperse the crowd.

Scooters and a car were burned along one of the capital's symbols of wealth and prestige, the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Police said 35 peo-

ple were later arrested. Protesters and police also clashed on a pedestrian bridge linking the two banks of the Seine, a span heavily visited by tourists.

Underscoring the seriousness of Saturday's protests, President Emmanuel Macron reacted sharply on Twitter. "Once again, the republic was attacked with extreme violence – its guardians, its representatives, its symbols," he wrote.

Skirmishes also broke out between police and protesters in major cities in western France including Nantes and Caen, while in Bordeaux, five police officers were hurt and 11 people arrested. In Rennes, the capital of Brittany, protesters broke a door to city hall. In Toulouse, 2,000 people took to the streets, with some throwing stones at police.

But it was in Paris that the protests broke new ground with the attack on the ministry building along Rue de Grenelle, where a number of important government offices are located.

"It wasn't me who was attacked, it was the republic," a shaken-looking Mr Griveaux said, after he was evacu-



ated from his offices.

The government's most familiar face on television, he has also been the most aggressive in adopting Mr Macron's harsh new line against the protest movement.

Last Friday, Mr Griveaux declared that the yellow vest movement had become "the province of agitators

who want upheaval, and, at bottom, to overthrow the government". A watchword of the protest movement has been a demand that Mr Macron resign.

A yellow vest leader, Mr Eric Drouet, was arrested this past week on charges of organising an undeclared demonstration, setting off



Left: Police in Paris keeping watch outside the chief government spokesman's office on Saturday after protesters forced their way in earlier after breaking down the door (above). PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

concerns of a backlash that would re-energise the demonstrations.

The weeks of unrest have pressured Mr Macron to act. Mid-last month, he scrapped a contentious fuel tax increase and promised extra cash for minimum wage earners and tax cuts for pensioners.

NYTIMES, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Giving flight to mini butterfly kites

Kite-flying enthusiast Carlos Ong can fly all sorts of kites, big and small. The 45-year-old is one of the few rare hobbyists in Singapore who are able to make mini kites that are not merely decorative ornaments, but can actually fly.

Of the various mini kites that Mr Ong has made, he finds the butterfly ones most challenging. In order to make the butterfly kite fly, both symmetry and precision in craftsmanship are important in ensuring that the kite is aerodynamic and can glide like a real butterfly.

Mr Ong is seen here gluing the bamboo spines to the finished artwork of a butterfly at his home last November. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

SEE HOME B6-7



Singapore supplies additional treated water at Johor's request

Production at Johor's water plants was disrupted recently due to pollution in river catchment

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

National water agency PUB has, at Johor's request, supplied additional treated water to Malaysia after production there was disrupted due to pollution.

In response to media queries, PUB said yesterday that an additional six million gallons per day (mgd) of treated water was supplied between Jan 2 and Jan 4.

PUB said production at Johor's water plants was disrupted recently by pollution in the river catchment. PUB's Johor River Waterworks was not affected by the incident.

"At Johor's request, PUB helped to tide Johor residents over the water supply disruption by turning on PUB's Pasir Gudang offtake and supplying an additional six million gallons per day of treated water between Jan 2 and Jan 4, 2019," a spokesman said.

The 6 mgd was on top of the 16 mgd that Singapore usually supplies Johor.

Under the 1962 Water Agreement, Singapore is required to supply Johor with 5 mgd of treated water.

In practice, the Republic has been supplying 16 mgd of treated water to Johor at its request.

Last year, Singapore also supplied additional water in excess of the usual 16 mgd for 20 days at the request of Johor, PUB said.

PUB added that it has supplied all



Water pipes beside the Bukit Timah Expressway. Under the 1962 Water Agreement, Singapore is required to supply Johor with 5 mgd of treated water. In practice, the Republic has been supplying 16 mgd to Johor at its request. ST FILE PHOTO

the additional treated water above 5 mgd on "a goodwill basis" at the same price as under the 1962 Water Agreement, that is, 50 sen per 1,000 gallons.

This is a fraction of the cost of treating the water, and "has been done without prejudice to our rights under the 1962 Water Agreement".

The agency said there has been longstanding cooperation between the water agencies of the two countries.

"PUB has thus far been responsive in assisting Johor residents to reduce the impact of their water

6

Additional treated water, in million gallons per day (mgd), supplied to Malaysia between Jan 2 and Jan 4. The 6 mgd was on top of the 16 mgd that Singapore usually supplies Johor.

disruptions, in the spirit of good neighbourliness."

According to recent reports in Malaysian daily The Star, a sand-mining company caused river pollution which disrupted water treatment at the Semangar plant in Johor on Jan 1.

The disruption affected 3,000 houses in Taman Desa Tebrau and surrounding areas.

Water was restored after more than 30 hours of the taps running dry.

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Big developers' share prices take a beating

The cooling measures that hit the market last July have hammered share prices of the country's big developers to the point where some are at "close-to-crisis valuations".

The change in fortunes since the July 6 measures has been stark with property shares under the FTSE ST Real Estate Holding & Development Index down between 20 and 25 per cent with little prospect of improvement given a projected slowdown in sale volumes and continued declines in home prices.

Private home prices had started to recover in the second quarter of 2017 but that honeymoon lasted only five quarters thanks to the bucket of cold water thrown over the sector in July. Home prices dipped 0.1 per cent in the fourth quarter last year from the preceding three months, according to Urban Redevelopment Authority flash estimates last week.

Another dampener is that up to 20,000 private residential units (excluding executive condominiums) could hit the market, most in this half. Small wonder that blue-chip property bellwether City Developments (CDL), which analysts say has the largest unsold inventory, and UOL Group were among the five worst-performing Straits Times Index constituents last year. CDL had a negative return of 35 per cent while UOL's clocked in at 30 per cent. The STI ended last year down 9.8 per cent, compared with an 18 per cent gain in 2017.

Meanwhile, Capitaland lost 12 per cent and Far East Orchard is down 20 per cent. Chinese developer Yanlord Land lost 25 per cent last year as concerns over China's slowdown and trade tensions took root.

DBS analysts Derek Tan and Mervin Song think "most of the negative news has been factored in".

OCBC Investment Research analyst Andy Wong believes Capitaland will benefit from the progress in trade talks and initiatives to unlock shareholder value. There is also growing optimism that China will look at further stimulus measures this year.

DBS Group Research noted last week: "While we see good value in developers' share prices, we are not buyers at this level yet."

That said, developers were relatively successful in their project launches last year.

The DBS report noted: "When compared against the total number of units in (the 15 best-selling projects), developers have achieved a sell-through rate of 44 per cent, a respectable number... despite uncertainty following the measures."

Oxley, CDL and Chip Eng Seng launched the most number of units – close to 10,000 in all of last year – with Oxley accounting for about 19 per cent of that.

DBS noted: "For developers that have been active in land-banking like CDL and UOL, our focus will be on their ability to achieve strong sell-through rates to minimise their exposure to the slowing market."

But other analysts are more bullish. CGS-CIMB's Lim Siew Khue has upgraded Singapore developers to "overweight" from "neutral" owing to their "close-to-crisis valuations" after the cooling measures.

Ms Lim also maintained her "overweight" rating on real estate investment trusts (Reits).

Grace Leong

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Land Transport Authority



Taiwan's ruling DPP picks moderate to take the helm

Ex-Cabinet secretary-general Cho Jung-tai to take over from Tsai as party chairman after winning 72.6% of vote

TAIPEI • Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) elected a new chairman yesterday, choosing a moderate to fill the post vacated by President Tsai Ing-wen after the party's disappointing performance in recent polls.

Mr Cho Jung-tai, a consensus candidate backed by major party figures, took 72.6 per cent or 24,699 of the ballots cast by party members, according to Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA).

The former Cabinet secretary-general comfortably defeated Mr You Ying-lung, an openly pro-independence rival who supported a recent call by four party heavyweights for Ms Tsai not to seek re-election next year.

Mr You, a polling expert and chairman of the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation, took 9,323 votes, reported CNA.

The DPP will confirm Mr Cho's election as chairman at its central advisory meeting on Wednesday.

Mr Cho's term will run until May 19 next year.

Mr Michael Cole, a Taipei-based expert with the University of Nottingham's China Policy Institute, said the vote result bolstered Ms Tsai's chances of standing for a second term. "Party members voted for continuity," he told Agence France-Presse (AFP), adding that other

countries "will also be reassured".

"It certainly makes it much more likely that she will be on the ticket for re-election," he said.

In 2016, Ms Tsai and the DPP secured a landslide election victory, sweeping away a government that had built much closer ties with China over the previous decade.

The result rattled Beijing because Ms Tsai refuses to acknowledge that the self-ruled island is part of "one China".

Beijing cut communication with her administration, stepped up military drills, poached several of Taiwan's dwindling diplomatic allies and started economically pressuring the island.

In November last year, Ms Tsai's DPP suffered a string of defeats in local elections, fuelled by a backlash over her domestic reforms and deteriorating economic ties with China, Taiwan's largest market.

Ms Tsai resigned the party chairmanship but stayed on as president, staying above the fray in the vote to replace her.

The DPP leadership vote was closely watched by China and the United States.

China still sees Taiwan as part of its territory to be reunified, despite the two sides being ruled separately since they split in 1949 after a civil war.



Mr Cho Jung-tai (left), the newly elected chairman of Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party, arriving for a press conference at the party headquarters in Taipei yesterday. He fills the post which President Tsai Ing-wen (far left) vacated following the party's disappointing performance in local elections last November. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

VOTE FOR CONTINUITY

Party members voted for continuity... It certainly makes it much more likely that she will be on the ticket for re-election.



MR MICHAEL COLE, a Taipei-based expert with the University of Nottingham's China Policy Institute, on the party vote result bolstering President Tsai Ing-wen's chances of standing for a second term.

While Beijing has reacted frostily to Ms Tsai, she is from a much more moderate wing within her party that favours talks.

Ms Tsai is squeezed between China and more radical members of her own party who favour pushing for independence – something Taiwan has never formally declared.

While the win means she is less likely to clash with her party's new leader, the DPP remains divided and Ms Tsai has yet to declare whether she will run again in next year's presidential election.

A party schism in the run-up to 2020 could favour the Kuomintang, the pro-Beijing party that was turfed out two years ago. It doubled its seats in November's elections, even defeating the DPP in its traditional stronghold of Kaohsiung.

A DPP swing towards its more radical wing might also worry Washington, reported AFP.

The US remains Taiwan's most powerful military ally, but maintains that Taipei must not move closer to a formal declaration of independence for fear of stoking a

Chinese invasion.

Last Wednesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping described Taiwan's unification with the mainland as "inevitable", adding that Beijing is willing to discuss political as well as "peaceful unification" issues with political parties and groups in Taiwan that recognise the "one China" principle.

He also reiterated China's willingness to use force if necessary, especially if Taiwan ever declares full independence.

On Saturday, Ms Tsai criticised Beijing's plan to engage in political negotiations with opposition parties rather than her government.

In a Facebook post on Saturday, Mr Cho called on the people of Taiwan to stand united against China's provocations and support Ms Tsai, reported news website Taiwan News.

Drawing an analogy to the sport of volleyball, Mr Cho said that "when a front-row player spikes the volleyball, the back-row players should not engage in finger-pointing", the report said.

Pelosi plans new Bills to reopen US govt agencies after talks fail

WASHINGTON • US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Democrats would pass new legislation to try to reopen parts of the government this week after talks between the Trump administration and Democratic negotiators failed to end a two-week partial government shutdown.

President Donald Trump is demanding US\$5.6 billion (\$8.7 billion) to build a wall along the United States border with Mexico but Democrats in control of the House of Representatives last week passed a Bill to reopen the government without providing additional funding for the wall.

Mr Trump, who says he will not sign the Bill until he gets the money for the wall, stood firm on his demands but conceded yesterday that the barrier could be "steel instead of concrete".

"We have to build the wall," he told reporters as he left the White House for the Camp David presidential retreat. "It's about safety, it's about security for our country."

Mr Trump has in recent days backed away from his earlier insistence that it be a concrete wall, saying that a steel fence would work just as well, but he has stuck to his demand of US\$5.6 billion.

White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney yesterday also raised the

possibility of changing the construction materials used in order to reach a compromise.

Speaking to NBC's Meet The Press, he also said the shutdown, now entering its third week, could "drag on a lot longer".

After a meeting aimed at breaking the deadlock failed on Saturday, Ms Pelosi said House Democrats would seek to reopen government agencies next week through piecemeal appropriation Bills, starting with the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service.

She said: "This action is necessary so that the American people can receive their tax refunds on schedule."

Vice-President Mike Pence led the administration's team in the meeting with Democratic negotiators on Saturday. He said that it was "productive" but an aide said there was no in-depth discussion of a possible compromise level of funding for border security.

A Democratic aide familiar with the meeting said Democratic staff urged the administration to reopen the government, arguing that progress on the contentious issue of border security would be difficult while the government was closed.

The aide said the administration instead "doubled down on their partisan proposal that led to the Trump

shutdown in the first place".

With the two sides sticking to their positions, a quarter of the federal government has been closed for two weeks, leaving 800,000 public workers unpaid.

Those on the job and not being paid include airline security officers and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents.

The shutdown has left museums shuttered, garbage piling up at national parks, and workers concerned about paying their bills.

Mr Jared Kushner, Mr Trump's son-in-law and a senior adviser, also attended the meeting at the White House, along with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and Mr Mulvaney.

They were negotiating with senior staff for the top Democrats in Congress, Ms Pelosi and Senator Chuck Schumer.

Ms Pelosi, who took over as House Speaker last week following Democratic victories at the mid-term elections in November, has described Mr Trump's proposed wall as "immoral" and a "waste of money".

Building a wall along the US-Mexico frontier was a central plank in Mr Trump's 2016 election campaign.

A Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll



showed 50 per cent of the public blame Mr Trump for the shutdown and 7 per cent blame Republican lawmakers, against 32 per cent who blame Democrats.

Mr Trump threatened on Friday to take the step of using emergency powers to build the wall without Congress' approval. Such a move would almost certainly be met with legal challenges.

The funding Bill passed by Democrats on Thursday included US\$1.3 billion for border fencing and US\$300 million for other border security items, including technology and cameras.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

(Front row, from left) Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, Vice-President Mike Pence and senior adviser Jared Kushner (second row) were among those at the meeting. PHOTO: NYTIMES

Security at airports not hit for now: US officials

WASHINGTON • US transportation security officials have played down concerns that the government shutdown poses a threat to safety at major airports, but warned that the second half of next week could be crucial if workers do not get paid.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screeners at airports are considered "essential" employees and are working without pay in the government shutdown that has entered a third week. But, according to CNN, "hundreds" have been calling in sick due to the closure.

If the government resumes funding by Thursday, the 51,739 TSA employees supporting airport security will be paid the following day. "We're scheduled to be paid on Friday. If we go past midweek missing a pay period, that certainly changes the environment," said TSA spokesman Michael Bilello.

Nationwide, the call-ins have not had much of an effect on operations, he and other officials said.

As of Saturday morning, the maximum TSA wait time was 36 minutes, and the maximum PreCheck wait time was 17 minutes, both within TSA standards of 45 and 15 minutes, respectively. The TSA PreCheck programme allows travellers to have expedited security screening.

At New York's JFK airport on Friday, the maximum wait time was 21 minutes and the maximum PreCheck wait was four minutes. At Dallas-Fort Worth International, the wait time was slightly longer but still within TSA standards. Over 90 per cent of passengers waited less than 15 minutes, Mr Bilello said.

For security reasons, the agency does not release specific staffing numbers.

The Airports Council International, a trade body for the world's airport authorities, expressed concerns about the shutdown. "A prolonged government shutdown could potentially impact security and wait times at airports, as transportation security officers seek other employment," said Mr Christopher Bidwell, senior vice-president for security. BLOOMBERG, NYTIMES

Rakhine rehab efforts in peril amid more fighting

Conflict between Myanmar military and ethnic armed group threatens ongoing UN projects

Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

Fighting is threatening to escalate between the Myanmar military and an ethnic armed group seeking self-determination in Rakhine state, which is still struggling to recover from the violence that caused some 700,000 refugees to flee.

In a statement released on Saturday night, the Arakan Army (AA), which is made up of ethnic Rakhines, said the Myanmar military used helicopters to launch bomb attacks that afternoon, and vowed to “take the necessary action” if it continued.

AA, according to state media, killed 13 policemen in a coordinated ambush at four police posts on Myanmar’s Independence Day on Friday. Unsettled questions about resource allocation and political decentralisation have fuelled decades of conflict between various ethnic armed groups and the military across the country.

A military spokesman denied that the helicopters dropped bombs. “We used small weapons and machine guns from the helicopters,” Brigadier-General Zaw Min Tun told The Straits Times. “We will do what we need to do to end the insurgency.”

AA is part of the powerful Northern Alliance of ethnic armed organisations that has not come on board a nationwide ceasefire agreement sealed with 10 other groups so far. The Northern Alliance has three other members – the Kachin Independence Army, Ta’ang National Liberation Army and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army.

In recent months, AA has ramped up attacks on the Myanmar military in northern Rakhine state. It was from Rakhine that some 700,000 Rohingya fled in 2017, after clashes triggered a scorched-earth military “clearance” operation that a United Nations fact-finding mission has likened to genocide.

Rohingya refugees are now sheltering in neighbouring Bangladesh. Efforts to repatriate them in November stalled amid fears that they would return to mass detention camps with no citizenship rights.

Unlike the Rohingya – who are Muslims, and are not recognised by Myanmar as being part of the 135 official ethnic groups – the Rakhines are Buddhists and have full citizenship rights as part of this official list.

Historical animosity simmers between the Rakhines and Rohingya. But AA commander-in-chief Tun Myat Naing said in an interview with local media group Irrawaddy last year that if the Rohingya were repatriated back to Myanmar, it meant the government accepted that they were citizens. “If they are accepted as Myanmar citizens, they should have equal citizenship rights under existing laws. Repatriated refugees should not be kept in places like detention centres,” he said.

Peace talks appeared to be making some headway late last year. Government peace negotiators met representatives from the Northern Alliance in the Chinese city of Kunming in September. However, Rakhine state was excluded from a unilateral ceasefire declared by the military last month to coax armed groups to the negotiating table.

Fighting between AA and Myanmar’s military, which continued over the new year, has displaced at least 2,500 people, said the UN last week.

Rakhine state’s chief minister, meanwhile, survived a mine attack

on his convoy on Jan 1.

The worsening conflict could complicate rehabilitation efforts under way in Rakhine. UN agencies, for example, have surveyed 50 villages in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships and are carrying out 35 of what it calls “small-scale quick impact projects” that aim to “improve livelihoods, access to basic services, build trust and promote social cohesion”.

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Ethnic Rakhine people, who fled from an area of conflict, at a temporary camp in Kyauk Taw township, northern Rakhine state, last Thursday. In recent months, the Arakan Army has ramped up attacks on the Myanmar military in Rakhine, from where some 700,000 Rohingya fled in 2017 for neighbouring Bangladesh. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



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On Saturday night, the Arakan Army, which is made up of ethnic Rakhines, said the Myanmar military used helicopters to launch bomb attacks that afternoon, and vowed to “take the necessary action” if it continued...

A military spokesman denied that the helicopters dropped bombs.

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WORLD



ZHAO WEI
CHINESE ACTRESS IN
BURBERRY'S 'CREEPY'
CHINESE NEW YEAR AD A10



New unlicensed hotels have sprouted in George Town (above) in areas such as Love Lane. Penang Island City Council officers (below) knocking down a room in an illegal hotel in a recent operation. PHOTOS: ST FILE, THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Penang clamps down on illegal hotels in George Town

Tourism boom fuels resurgence of illegal lodgings in heritage enclave

GEORGE TOWN • The popular George Town World Heritage Site in Penang has been described by Unesco as “a living testimony to the multicultural heritage of Asia and Europe”.

But city officials said they have seen a resurgence of illegal hotels or guest houses with questionable fire safety standards in parts of the heritage enclave. In recent years, officials have closed down many of the illegal hotels.

“Yes, we know that new ones are emerging again,” Mayor Yew Tung Seang said.

Several new guest houses have

been built, especially in Stewart Lane and Love Lane.

Some replaced guest houses that were shut down when the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) went on a crackdown last year.

In 2014, the state government issued temporary licences to the guest houses and small hotels that began sprouting all over the heritage enclave. The purpose was to allow the businesses to operate while their operators worked on fulfilling all the requirements for permanent licences.

Fuelled by booming tourist arrivals, these start-up hoteliers created chic and trendy accommodations in pre-war houses but some did not have the financial means to comply with regulations such as fire safety and heritage conservation.

There were over 260 unlicensed hotels and guest houses then.

In November 2017, the grace period ended and MBPP came down hard on all those who failed to comply with by-laws for a hotel licence.

Enforcers then raided several hotels and tore down cramped rooms with sledgehammers.

Datuk Yew said hoteliers should know that they must have the proper licences.

“The requirements they must fulfil are to ensure the safety of guests and smooth running of the city. If everyone does whatever he wants in the heritage enclave, we will have a mess,” he said.

It is understood that MBPP is awaiting instructions from the state government following the recent crackdown on illegal hotels.

In the meantime, Mr Yew urged new hoteliers to submit their licence applications to MBPP.

“The sooner you come, the more time you have to work on compliance before we begin enforcement,” he said.

To get their licences, hoteliers must convert the premises from residential to commercial status. This requires planning permission and it costs tens of thousands of ringgit to draw up the building plans.

The owner of a new hotel in Stewart Lane, who did not want to be identified, said she did not fully agree with the rules.

She said she rented a pre-war house for her hotel. “It was a closed-down hotel, so the rooms are all ready. I have been in the hotel line for many years. This is my

passion. We are dedicated to ensuring the safety of our guests and I feel that the requirements from MBPP are too stringent,” she told The Star.

“How can you expect us to have concrete flooring on the top floor when this is a pre-war house? Guests want to live in an old place like this, which has wooden flooring. Some of the regulations don’t make sense,” she added.

She said that if she were to carry out the renovations to comply with the rules, the landlord would not pay for it.

“Some of the requirements need major renovations to the building. If I do it and the landlord ends my tenancy, I won’t get compensation,” she said. THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



NO FREE-FOR-ALL

The requirements they must fulfil are to ensure the safety of guests and smooth running of the city. If everyone does whatever he wants in the heritage enclave, we will have a mess.



CITY MAYOR YEW TUNG SEANG

Syndicate targets Malaysian bank clients

JOHOR BARU • Dozens of people in Malaysia have been duped into revealing security codes for access to their online banking accounts and had their money siphoned out.

This has resulted in hundreds of thousands of ringgit being “transferred out” since the cases first emerged several months ago.

Sources said the syndicate behind the scam had managed to get hold of the account holders’ usernames, passwords and contact details.

But an online banking transaction requires the account holder to key in his username, password and TAC number. TAC numbers are six-digit numbers sent to the registered account owner’s mobile phone for verification.

Said a security source: “To get the TAC number, a syndicate member would call the genuine account holder on the phone and dupe him into revealing the TAC number. He would usually call the victim and say

that he had submitted the wrong mobile number when registering for his online banking account, so the TAC number was accidentally sent to the victim instead.”

The unsuspecting account holders would reveal the TAC details to the syndicate member, who would then use it to start transferring money from the account.

The sources cited the case of a genuine account holder who was duped up to six times into revealing

his TAC number in one day.

It is believed that at least two commercial banks have been affected in recent months. Asked how the syndicate was able to get hold of all the account details and passwords, sources said there could have been a “data breach” involving the banks or other parties.

The sources said some personal information could also have been bought or obtained via other means.

In Johor alone, there have been at least a dozen cases with losses amounting to thousands of ringgit.

In one case, a retiree in his 50s lost his savings of almost RM30,000 (S\$9,900).

Sources said the victim claimed that after he received the TAC number on his mobile phone, someone called him within minutes to say he had registered the retiree’s mobile number by accident and wanted the TAC details to rectify it.

“The syndicate member called the man at least six times and made transfers of between RM60 and RM10,000 to various accounts,” one source said.

In another case in Kluang, a

teacher in his 30s was duped of several hundred ringgit by a person who wanted the TAC number, claiming that his wife had registered the wrong mobile phone number.

Federal Commercial Crimes Investigations Department deputy director (intelligence and operations), Mohd Sakri Arifin advised members of the public not to disclose their details to anyone.

“Never reveal your personal online banking details, including TAC numbers, to anyone on the phone. Always hang up such calls and check with the bank. The bank will usually contact customers via official letters,” he said.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Do more to promote new China trade corridor: Chan

Step up efforts to get more people to use land-sea networks linking western China to S-E Asia, says minister

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Chongqing

More needs to be done to attract users to the new land and sea trade corridor that connects western China to South-east Asia, said Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing.

“Coordination among the western provinces in China is key as we

work towards the common vision of enhancing trade flows and achieving greater regional integration,” he said in an e-mail interview with Chongqing Daily published today.

Mr Chan said while good progress has been made in linking railway networks in western China to the Qinzhou port in southern Guangxi – which connects to South-east Asia via sea – more effort is needed to boost cargo vol-

umes to further lower costs.

This new trade link offers a faster alternative to transport goods between western China and international destinations compared with the conventional route via the Yangtze River.

It extends from the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), which is the third joint project between China and Singapore that aims to spur the growth of China’s less-developed western region through better transport, financing and data connectivity.

Mr Chan listed three areas that need further work to make the new trade route more attractive to po-

tential users. First is to enhance the trade corridor’s “hardware”, particularly the last-mile connectivity, he said.

Currently, cargo is transferred from trains to ships via trucks, which slows down the process.

Mr Chan said it is “critical” that the rail lines are extended all the way to the Qinzhou Port so that cargo can be transferred directly from train to ship.

Second, inspection processes across different provincial borders and different transport modes should be streamlined.

Third, there should be ways to exchange trade information electroni-

cally ahead of time so that cargo can be cleared and released immediately upon arrival at the port.

Mr Chan, in the interview, said more than 40 Singapore companies took part in the inaugural International Smart China Expo in Chongqing last year.

He called the expo a “new highlight” in the information and communications technology collaborations between the two sides, and said more can also be done to deepen data connectivity.

This includes encouraging Singapore companies to tap the innovation centre for small and medium-sized information, communication and media enterprises to take part in related projects in Chongqing.

Mr Chan is in Chongqing on a two-day visit.

He is accompanied by Manpower Minister Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State for Health and Transport Lam Pin Min and senior officials from Enterprise Singapore, the Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore, the Monetary Authority of Singapore and Singapore Customs.

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Chinese zodiac art exhibition to welcome Year of the Pig



A Chinese zodiac art exhibition has opened at the Palace Museum in Beijing, featuring works by traditional art master Han Meilin (above) on the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac calendar. On display are paintings, calligraphy, sculptures, wood-carvings, furniture and folk handicrafts. The exhibition will last until Feb 20, running through the Chinese New Year holiday. During the new year, it is very common for the Chinese to buy all sorts of zodiac art pieces to decorate their homes. The Chinese zodiac calendar is based on a 12-year cycle, with each year being assigned one of the 12 animals: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. The year 2019 is the Year of the Pig, starting on Feb 5. During the Chinese New Year holiday, the Palace Museum will hold cultural events on the sidelines of the exhibition to spice up the festive atmosphere. Han, 83, is best known for his design of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games mascot Fuwa. He donated 10 pieces of his artwork to the Palace Museum last Saturday. Stamps, with adorable pig images symbolising the Year of the Pig, were also issued at the museum. PHOTO: XINHUA

Shanghai police bust gang for fake Dyson hairdryers

SEIZED

400

Finished products

1,500

Semi-finished products

200,000

Spare parts

SHANGHAI • Shanghai police have cracked a criminal gang suspected of manufacturing and selling fake Dyson hairdryers, a fashionable icon coveted by the Chinese middle class and young people.

The gang of 36, based in Huizhou, Guangdong province, had a clear division of labour in production, wholesale and retail, said the police, who received reports from the public last August that some consumers had bought fake Dyson hairdryers from stores on various online shopping platforms.

Two production sites were raided, and the suspects were arrested on Dec 14 on suspicion of counterfeiting a registered trademark, police said last Friday.

Nearly 400 finished products, more than 1,500 semi-finished products and more than 200,000 spare parts were seized.

The hairdryers by Dyson, head-



A Shanghai police officer showing a fake (left) and real Dyson hairdryer last Friday. PHOTO: CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

quartered in Britain, have been popular since their market debut in China in August 2016.

During the annual Singles Day online shopping festival on Nov 11 last year, the hairdryers were among

products that saw sales worth 10 million yuan (\$2 million) in the first hour of trading.

The police said the knock-offs were sold at 120 yuan each to wholesalers and retailers, and then sold

at a price of between 2,200 and 2,300 yuan as “discounted products” or “European version” products on online shopping platforms.

The fake hairdryers were sold in several provinces and municipalities, including Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai.

Mr Yu Songbin, a police officer with the economic crime team of the Pudong police, who handled the case, said the suspects set up a company in Huizhou early last year to produce hairdryers of their own brand that looked similar to Dyson products, but sales were poor.

They soon decided to make counterfeit Dyson hairdryers instead.

“They hired technicians to disassemble real Dyson products and analyse their structures, and employed more than 30 people for different positions, including purchasing parts and components, working on the assembly line, and wholesaling and retailing the counterfeit products on the Internet,” said Mr Yu.

Police said that the sales from the knock-offs had reached more than 10 million yuan by the time the case was cracked.

“The knock-offs are slightly different from the real products in material quality and colour, but are obviously different in the working mechanism, air volume and sound after the machines are turned on,” Mr Yu said. CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Didi driver in China admits raping, murdering passenger

HANGZHOU • A 28-year-old car-pool driver has pleaded guilty to raping and killing a passenger, ending a high-profile case that triggered a safety overhaul of China’s hitch carpooling service.

The defendant, Zhong Yuan, pleaded guilty to raping and murdering a 20-year-old woman who booked a hitch carpooling service from Didi Chuxing on Aug 24 in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, according to a release from the Wenzhou Intermediate People’s Court.

Prosecutors said Zhong, a native of Sichuan province, had chalked up debts after borrowing money from online peer-to-peer lending platforms to fund his gambling habit.

So he decided to rob female passengers while working as a hitch driver for Didi Chuxing, the nation’s largest ride-hailing company, the prosecutors added.

On Aug 23, Zhong tried to rob a female passenger, but his efforts failed. The next day, he raped and fatally stabbed a female passenger surnamed Zhao in Yueqing county in Wenzhou. Ms Zhao had boarded the car to meet her friends in Yongjia, also in Wenzhou, to go to a classmate’s birthday party.

Zhong was arrested by local police shortly after killing her and was charged with homicide, rape and robbery, according to the court release.

The trial was not open to the public due to privacy concerns for the victim. The court said a verdict would be given at a later date.

The homicide case followed a similar murder in Zhengzhou, Henan province.

A 21-year-old flight assistant was killed on May 6 after hailing a car from Didi Chuxing. The suspect, surnamed Liu, abandoned his vehicle and drowned himself in a river after allegedly killing the passenger, said local police.

The cases led to a national outcry and demands for better security for passengers of car-hailing services.

The Ministry of Transport subsequently announced plans to tighten the regulation of the car-hailing industry.

Didi Chuxing suspended its hitch services and adopted safety measures, such as making it easier for passengers to contact the police in an emergency and having audio and video recordings during rides.

The move, however, sparked heated discussion on whether the surveillance measures to boost passenger safety are an infringement of personal privacy.

CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

The cases led to a national outcry and demands for better security for passengers of car-hailing services.

Burberry ad more creepy than festive, say netizens

Fashion house's Chinese New Year campaign gets mixed reviews on social media in China

Lee Choo Kiong

A Burberry advertising campaign fronted by Chinese actresses Zhao Wei and Zhou Dongyu celebrating "togetherness" to usher in the Chinese New Year has been ridiculed as "creepy" on social media.

Shot and directed by photographer Ethan James Green, one of the campaign photos posted on the fashion powerhouse's social media sites last Thursday had eight unsmiling

models, including Zhao and Zhou, posing for a "family" photo donned in Burberry's classic signature items and streetwear pieces.

The photo lacks the festive cheer typical in Chinese New Year-related fashion shots. Accompanying the photo was the message: "Introducing our new collection, curated for #BurberryChineseNewYear."

"A portrait of togetherness, gathering the cross generations of family for a seasonal celebration. Daring #ZhaoWei and #ZhouDongyu;

directed and photographed by @EthJGreen."

Lost In Hong Kong star and businesswoman Zhao, 42, said in a statement: "The campaign draws on the concept of families reuniting for the most important holiday of the year, and represents a sense of belonging, but in a very fresh way."

Her fellow Burberry brand ambassador, Zhou, said: "A family portrait is a very simple concept, but the ceremonial sense behind it holds so much more."

"For me, being able to go home once a year to spend quality time with my family is something I value above all else, and I wouldn't trade it for anything," said the 26-year-old

star of This Is Not What I Expected.

But the ad's festive message was certainly not that obvious to some netizens on Chinese microblogging site Weibo. Said one user, Ha Pi Zou Jiang Hu: "What a creepy family portrait. It looks like a horror movie."

Another user Angelique commented on Burberry's Weibo page: "Am I the only one to say pulling a long face does not go well with the Chinese New Year?"

"This is a group of people who plan to kill this ultra-rich grandma and keenly fight over her inheritance," wrote miaomeili.

Still, some netizens applauded the British luxury label's rendition of the Chinese tradition.



Burberry's Chinese New Year ad campaign featuring unsmiling models draws brickbats and some applause from netizens. PHOTO: TWITTER / BURBERRY

"BurberryChineseNewYear's return to tradition is timeless," said love zhen shan mei.

Weibo user Juuudy Zhu said she was "really sick of seeing a happy Chinese New Year". "The Spring Festival is not just a false appearance of bliss, I see a big label with a global vision viewing the Chinese festival

with a more tolerant perspective."

Brands such as Burberry, Gucci, and Hermes had reported resilient appetite from Chinese shoppers in the second quarter last year even as China-US trade tensions cast a pall over the broader economy.

leeck@sph.com.sg



Activists protesting in Bangkok yesterday against a possible delay of an election set to be held on Feb 24, following the lifting of a ban on political activity imposed after a 2014 coup. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thai activists protest as election faces delay

BANGKOK • Dozens of Thai activists yesterday protested against a possible delay of a national election set for next month, the first such gathering since the military government lifted a ban on political activity imposed after a 2014 coup.

The junta has promised and postponed the election several times since it came to power, with the lat-

est date set for Feb 24.

However, the vote faces yet another postponement after Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam suggested last Friday that post-election events might clash with rituals related to King Maha Vajiralongkorn's coronation from May 4 to May 6.

That prompted the first protest since the junta lifted a ban on politi-

cal activities and a gathering of more than five people last month.

"We want the government to hold an election as soon as possible so that democracy can move forward in our country," said Mr Anon Nampa, a human rights lawyer and anti-junta activist who organised the protest at the Victory Monument area in central Bangkok.

Protesters carried signs which

read "We Want Election" and "Election only on Feb 24, 2019", chanting "No delay!" in unison.

Thailand's Election Commission has not officially announced the postponement, but said it has acknowledged the government's suggestion that the vote be pushed back.

The military government also failed to issue an official decree by

Friday to commit to holding a general election, meaning it is less likely to be held on Feb 24 under the current timeline laid out.

The election is meant to restore democracy after a 2014 military coup ousted elected prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra, though changes to the Constitution in the interim ensure the military will retain a great deal of control. REUTERS

Saunas shed dowdy image in Japan

TOKYO • An increasing number of young people in Japan now enjoy saunas, shedding the activity's old-man image.

Recently, new sauna facilities have emerged, some offering temperatures lower than the conventional ones at 70 deg C to 80 deg C. Some saunas are even attached to work spaces.

Among the new wave of sauna enthusiasts or "saunners" is Ms Mika Saito, 33, who works at a university in Tokyo. She visits a public bathhouse in her neighbourhood almost every day after work.

There, she warms her body in a sauna room and takes a cold bath. She spends about an hour repeating this process several times. "Not



A sauna run by Skyspa Yokohama in Japan doubles as a conference room, where business executives can also conduct work-related meetings. PHOTO: SKYSPA YOKOHAMA

only is my body refreshed, but my mind is also renewed," she said.

Ms Saito has been posting messages related to saunas on Twitter for about three years. She feels that the popularity of saunas is spreading. "Recently, there has been an increasing number of postings from women who love saunas. I sometimes go to saunas together with such women on my days off."

Sauna facilities in Japan began appearing in the 1950s and 60s, but

many were for men only as they were often attached to capsule hotels. New services recently have helped to boost the popularity of saunas. They include "loyly", in which water is sprayed onto hot stones to make steam that helps users perspire, and "aufguss", in which users enjoy air currents created by a person waving a towel.

The sauna culture is promoted at some companies. Tokyo-based Tabi-Labo, an Internet media com-

pany, has subsidised sauna usage fees for its employees since August. About 80 per cent of its staff use the system. An executive said: "Communication between them has also become more active. It helps their jobs in a positive way."

At a Skyspa Yokohama sauna near Yokohama station, part of the facility has been transformed into a "co-working space" in a bid to attract customers.

YOMIURI SHIMBUN/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

30 killed as Afghan gold mine collapses

KUNDUZ (Afghanistan) • At least 30 people were killed when a gold mine collapsed in north-eastern Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, in the latest tragedy to strike the war-torn country.

Another seven were injured in the incident in Kohistan district of Badakhshan province, district governor Mohammad Rustam said.

Villagers had dug a 60m-deep shaft in a river bed to search for gold. They were inside when the walls fell in.

"The people were using an excavator to dig a big hole in the river when it collapsed, trapping dozens of workers," Mr Raghi said.

"At least 30 people have been killed, and seven wounded."

It was not clear why the shaft collapsed, but the provincial governor's spokesman Nik Mohammad Nazari said the miners were not professionals.

"The villagers have been involved in this business for decades,

with no government control over them," Mr Nazari said. "We have sent a rescue team to the area, but villagers have already started removing bodies from the site."

Defence ministry helicopters have been dispatched to deliver cash to the victims' families and airlift the wounded to hospitals, said Mr Hashmat Bahaduri, spokesman for the National Disaster Management Authority. He confirmed the casualty toll, but warned that the figures could change.

Families of the wounded will receive 10,000 afghanis (\$5181) in compensation, while those of the dead will get 50,000 afghanis, Mr Bahaduri said.

Badakhshan is a remote, mountainous province in north-east Afghanistan bordering Tajikistan, China and Pakistan.

The impoverished region is prone to landslides, particularly in the colder months, when heavy snow blankets the province.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

UK warns against travel to southern India after temple riots

Britons in Kerala told to stay alert after ruling allowing women in temples sparks violence

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (India) • Britain has warned tourists visiting the southern Indian state of Kerala after sporadic violence in recent days over the admission of women to one of Hinduism's holiest temples.

In updated travel advice, London on Saturday advised UK nationals in Kerala, popular with tourists particularly at this time of year, to "monitor media reports closely, remain vigilant and avoid large public gatherings".

The Sabarimala temple has been at the centre of a prolonged showdown between traditionalists and the authorities since September, when India's top court overturned a ban on women of menstruating age – deemed as those aged 10 to 50 – setting foot inside.

After several weeks of hardliners preventing women from accessing the hilltop temple, at times violently, earlier last week two women managed to sneak inside before dawn and become the first to worship there since the landmark ruling.

A third woman from Sri Lanka said she entered the temple last Thursday night but this was disputed by the temple authorities,

who performed a "purification" ritual after the two other women made their way into the shrine.

The entry of the women has sparked days of clashes across Kerala involving enraged Hindu devotees, riot police using tear gas and water cannon, and activists from Kerala's leftist state government – which supports the entry of women.

One man died and almost 300 people have been injured including more than 100 police officers and some 10 journalists, police said. More than 3,000 protesters have either been arrested or taken into preventive custody.

Police said last Saturday that unidentified attackers hurled a

Women are barred from a handful of Hindu temples in India, including Sabarimala, where it was considered a taboo for centuries before the ban was given legal force by Kerala High Court in 1991.



Police detaining an activist amid demonstrations after two women entered the Sabarimala temple in Kerala last week. In September last year, India's Supreme Court overturned a ban on women of menstruating age setting foot inside the temple. The decision sparked clashes involving enraged Hindu devotees, the police and activists who support the entry of women into the temple. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

home-made bomb at the home of a politician from the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and set ablaze the office of the hard-line Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) group. Both are opposed to the court's order to allow women inside the temple.

No injuries were reported in the blast or the fire, police said.

The fresh attacks came hours after unknown attackers bombed the house of a politician linked to the state's ruling Communist Party, which has vowed to implement the court order.

Kerala has a history of political violence between Hindu and the left-leaning parties.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Hindu nationalist BJP has joined calls by his party and the RSS for a statewide shutdown to protest against the women's entrance.

Mr Modi's party accuses the state government of backing "anti-religious" groups to violate Hindu traditions.

Hindu groups believe that women of menstruating age should not enter the temple because they are "impure" and the temple deity Ayyappa was celibate.

The Communist Party has ac-

used the BJP and RSS of inciting violence in the state.

Women are barred from a handful of Hindu temples in India, including Sabarimala, where it was

considered a taboo for centuries before the ban was given legal force by Kerala High Court in 1991.

But the Supreme Court in a landmark judgment in September over-

turned the Kerala court's ruling after six women lawyers petitioned it in 2006, challenging a ban that they said violated their fundamental rights. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A cyclist making his way in the smog in New Delhi last Thursday. Air quality was very poor despite a respite yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rain clears smog in Delhi but air quality remains 'very poor'

NEW DELHI • A rainy spell early yesterday brought better air to residents of New Delhi, giving them a brief respite from thick grey smog that has shrouded the Indian capital for the last two months, although air quality continued to be "very poor".

A measure of tiny, hazardous breathable particles known as PM 2.5, or particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, reached an average of 182 by noon, the Central Pollution Control Board said, its lowest since Nov 4.

But pollution was still five times more than a United States government-recommended level of 35 to stand at "unhealthy" levels, according to the US embassy.

"Change in weather conditions by rain or higher wind speed helps dissipate peak pollution, but we continue to need strong emergency actions such as shutting power plants," said Ms

Anumita Roychowdhury of the Centre for Science and Environment think-tank.

The federal government air quality index rated Delhi's air quality "very poor" yesterday and had a similar forecast for today, urging people with respiratory and cardiac problems to avoid polluted areas and limit outdoor movement.

A sharp drop in temperatures and wind speed over the last two weeks, combined with vehicle and industrial emissions, dust from building sites and smoke from rubbish burning, has stoked pollution over much of north India.

Levels of PM 2.5 hit their highest last year at 450 on Dec 23. Despite the pollution, there is little sign that Delhi's 20 million residents are taking steps to protect themselves. Activists say the apparent lack of concern gives politicians the cover they need for not tackling the issue adequately. REUTERS

Philippine storm's death toll rises to 126

MANILA • The death toll from a storm that devastated the Philippines shortly after Christmas rose to 126, the authorities said yesterday, adding that landslides caused by torrential rain were the top cause.

The storm hit central and eastern Philippine islands on Dec 29 and caused massive flooding and landslides. More than 100 people died in the mountainous Bicol region south-east of Manila, regional disaster officials said.

While the Bicol region is often hit by deadly typhoons, many people failed to take necessary precautions because the storm was not strong enough to be rated as a typhoon under the government's storm alert system, according to civil defence officials. They also said that many residents were reluctant to leave their homes during the Christmas holidays.

"In two days alone, Usman poured more than a month's worth of rainfall in the Bicol region," national disaster agency spokesman Edgar Posadas told Agence France-Presse, using the local name for the storm, which had weakened into a low-pressure area. "Our search and retrieval operations are ongoing but the sticky mud and the unstable soil are a challenge."

The death toll is likely to climb further with 26 people still missing, Mr Posadas added.

More than 152,000 people were displaced by the storm and 75 were injured, according to the national disaster agency.

President Rodrigo Duterte visited the storm-hit areas last Friday and urged officials to build evacuation centres instead of using schools as shelters for the displaced.

About 20 typhoons and storms batter the Philippines each year, killing hundreds of people.

The deadliest in recent years was Super Typhoon Haiyan which left more than 7,360 people dead or missing across the central Philippines in 2013. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Voice set to command spotlight at major tech expo

More speech-activated devices to flood consumer electronics market

SEATTLE • As he browsed digital store shelves last month in search of an aromatherapy diffuser, entrepreneur David Berger had a single requirement for his wife's Christmas gift: It had to work with Amazon.com's Alexa software.

"She's really into making the house smell beautiful, and I'm really into Alexa," said Mr Berger, who lives in Connecticut. "So this is a great gift for both of us."

Voice-activated digital assistants are racing from novelty to mainstream computing device.

More than a quarter of US adults will use one regularly next year, according to research company eMarketer, and they are increasingly ordering them to dim the lights, control the television and thermostat and, yes, turn on diffusers to waft scents around the house.

A recent survey found that when shoppers consider buying a smart-home device, they care less about the brand than whether it's compatible with smart speakers sold by Amazon, Alphabet's Google and Apple.

The diffuser that Mr Berger bought – sold by a little-known brand called Dularf – is one of some 28,000 items that now work with Alexa, according to Amazon, up from 4,000 at the beginning of last year. Google in October boasted of

10,000 such compatible devices.

Controlling smart-home devices with a voice command remains aspirational for most people. That is why companies keen to kick-start the nascent market are gearing up to make their case this week at CES in Las Vegas. The show runs from tomorrow until Friday.

The annual tech expo in recent years has been dominated by announcement of new products, from cars to bathroom mirrors, designed to make use of voice software.

"We're in a gold rush right now," said Mr James McQuivey, who tracks consumer technology trends for Forrester, a researcher.

By the time Amazon released the Echo speaker widely in 2015, the company was working to entice a range of hardware makers to make their network-enabled thermostats, light bulbs and televisions compatible with Alexa. Amazon released a set of programming tools for developers the following year.

Google, which released its own smart speaker in 2016, took a similar approach, offering software tools for developers to link up with Google Assistant.

Taken together, Amazon and Google probably accounted for at least four of every five smart speakers sold in the US last year, surveys show. Worldwide, the two accounted for about 60 per cent of sales during the third quarter, according to research firm Canalys.

"Everyone in the smart-home in-

JUMPING ON THE VOICE WAGON

Everyone in the smart-home industry is on the voice-control bus.



MR BRAD RUSSELL, who tracks Internet-connected home devices for Parks Associates, a research firm.

dustry is on the voice-control bus," said Mr Brad Russell, who tracks Internet-connected home devices for Parks Associates, a research firm. "They start with Amazon, then they go to Google, and maybe they do Apple."

Thermostats built by German start-up Tado are compatible with about a dozen smart-home platforms in the US. But chief product officer Christian Deilmann said the company is increasingly focusing its energies on Amazon, Google and Apple, which have the brand power and ecosystems to potentially attract millions more consumers.

Tado's sales surged after it passed the certification programmes that verify compatibility with voice software, Mr Deilmann said.

Tado also benefited from the marketing muscle and cash that US giants are dishing out to extend their

lead. For example, Tado thermostats are prominently displayed next to Google Home speakers in some European stores.

Amazon, meanwhile, contributed to a US\$50 million (\$68 million) round of venture capital funding raised by the Munich company last year.

A heavy dose of marketing will be required to persuade consumers that turning on a ceiling light with a voice command is really more convenient than flipping a switch.

Amazon, Apple and Google also will have to assuage fears that inviting an always-listening gadget into the home could imperil personal privacy.

Consumer surveys show that most people still use smart speakers for music, simple questions or setting alarms, not controlling the parade of Internet-enabled gadgets heading to CES show floors this week. Voice shopping, part of Alexa's early pitch given Amazon's expertise in online retail, hasn't taken off so far.

That doesn't dissuade early adopters like Mr Berger, who turned a personal interest in programming Alexa to answer questions from Airbnb guests into a business building voice-software management tools for hotels.

"People want it to change their lives more," he said. "That's why they're literally searching for 'Alexa-enabled' when they're looking for Christmas presents." BLOOMBERG

Amazon's senior vice-president for devices and services Dave Limp announcing last September that Apple Music will be available for Amazon's Alexa-powered speakers.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New US Congress set to see push to regulate tech firms

WASHINGTON • The newly installed United States Congress is expected to see a fresh effort to develop new regulations for big technology firms, with a focus on tougher enforcement of privacy and data protection.

The wave of data scandals that has hit Facebook and other online platforms has prompted growing calls for action by lawmakers looking to curb abuses of how private information is used and give consumers more clarity.

Significantly, most tech companies are pledging to willingly accept new regulations to set a uniform standard in the US following a sweeping set of rules that went into effect in the European Union last year, although few have offered details.

Federal regulations could preempt the enforcement of legislation enacted in California, which was modelled after the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

"Whether big tech and little tech like it or not, 2019 will be a year of regulation," said Mr Doug Clinton of the investment firm Loup Ventures, in a recent blogpost.

The analyst said he expects the US to consider "the most important points" of GDPR including consent, access, portability and erasure of personal information.

Senator Brian Schatz and 14 other Democrats have endorsed a Bill aimed at requiring online firms to safeguard personal information and stop the misuse of data.

"People have a basic expectation that the personal information they provide to websites and apps is well-protected and won't be used against them," Mr Schatz said in a statement last month.

"Just as doctors and lawyers are expected to protect and responsibly use the personal data they hold, online companies should be required to do the same."

Another proposal unveiled last month by the Centre for Democracy and Technology, a digital rights group in Washington, in consultation with industry and activist groups, covers consumer rights to access and correct data held by online firms, data portability, and limits on third-party access to data.

Significantly, it limits the kinds of data that companies can collect to what is needed for their services.

"Many apps collect your location information even if it has nothing to do with the service they are providing," said Ms Michelle Richardson, head of data and privacy for the organisation. "We want to fundamentally change how companies collect and use data."

Since the revelations over the hijacking of personal data of tens of millions of Facebook users by the political consultancy Cambridge Analytica, tech firms have come under heightened scrutiny from lawmakers and privacy activists.

Instead of pushing back, big tech firms have offered to cooperate with lawmakers on a national privacy Bill – although sceptics say this may be an effort to limit the reach of tougher state laws.

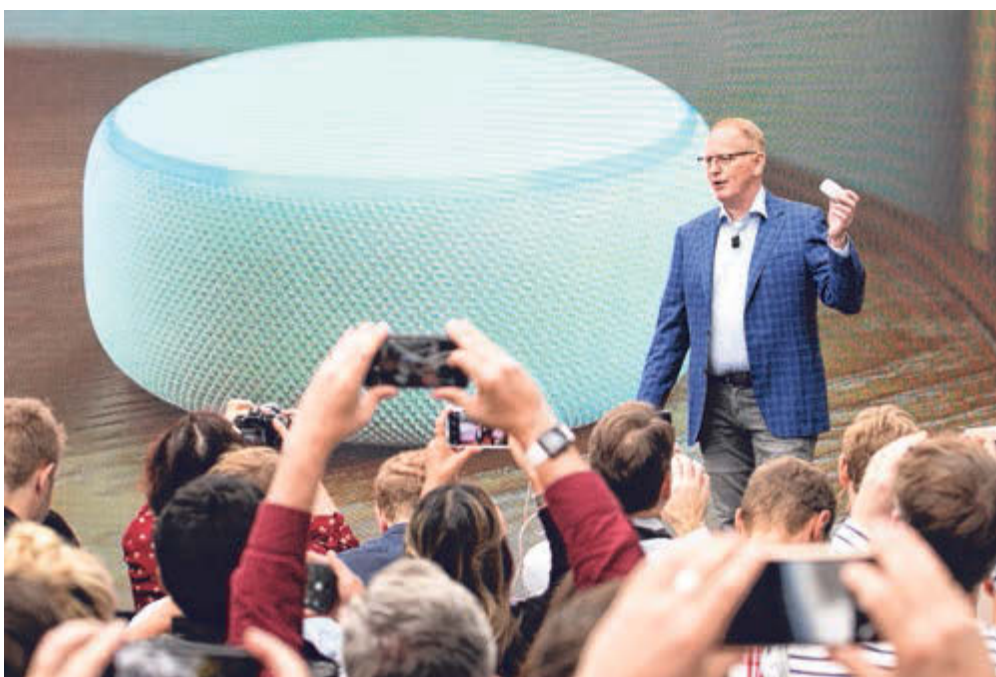
Google chief executive Sundar Pichai told a hearing last month: "I'm of the opinion that we are better off with more of an overarching data protection framework for users, and I think that would be good to do."

Apple CEO Tim Cook last year called for federal privacy legislation, while assailing the "weaponised" use of private data that is bought and sold online.

Mr Alan McQuinn, policy analyst at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a Washington think-tank, said that following the passage of a California privacy law, "the tech sector is now trying to get out in front of having segmented privacy rules".

Yet details of any new privacy Bill are likely to be complex, with battles looming on how far legislation should go.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Senator Elizabeth Warren speaking at an event last Saturday in Sioux City, Iowa. During her visit to the state, she spoke out against income inequality, among other things. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Democrat Warren kicks off White House run in Iowa

SIoux CITY (Iowa) • Senator Elizabeth Warren informally kicked off the 2020 Democratic presidential nominating fight on a weekend visit to Iowa, condemning the corrupting influence of money on politics and lamenting lost economic opportunities for working families.

In the state that holds the first presidential nominating contest in 13 months, Ms Warren introduced herself to Iowa crowds with tales of her working-class upbringing in Oklahoma and emphasised her signature theme of income inequality.

"Washington works great for those with money but not for anyone else. We need to call this what it is, corruption, pure and simple," the Massachusetts Senator told Democrats in Sioux City on the second of five public stops during her three-day visit.

It was an early jump on the race for Ms Warren, who formed a presidential exploratory committee and began hiring staff last week. So far she is the biggest name to enter what promises to be a crowded Democratic field, with at least two

dozen others considering a run.

Former housing secretary Julian Castro also has formed an exploratory committee, and former US congressman John Delaney became the first Democrat to formally declare last year and has campaigned extensively in the state.

But Ms Warren, 69, had Iowa to herself over the weekend, and she used the time to make contacts with prominent state activists and court crowds with promises to fight what she called a rigged economic system that favours the wealthy.

She has been one of the most outspoken critics of President Donald Trump, a Republican, but rarely mentioned him by name at her public events on Friday and Saturday.

In the Senate, Ms Warren is also an outspoken critic of Wall Street and is a leader of her party's progressive wing, but she could face competition in the nomination fight from other liberal voices, such as fellow senators Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris.

Democrats face lingering tensions between their most liberal voices, such as Ms Warren, and the more pragmatic wing, which includes former vice-president Joe Biden and several former governors and mayors who are considering running.

In Iowa, Ms Warren said her childhood in Oklahoma shaped her populist economic views.

She was the daughter of a janitor

who lost work after a heart attack, forcing her mother to take a minimum-wage job. "That minimum-wage job saved our house and it saved our family," Ms Warren said. "Today, a minimum-wage job in America will not keep a momma and a baby out of poverty. That's why I'm in this fight."

Local Democrats said they were anxious to start focusing on picking a challenger for Mr Trump, although most said it was way too early for them to commit to a candidate.

A December Des Moines Register/CNN poll of likely 2020 Democratic caucus-goers in Iowa found Ms Warren in fourth place with 8 per cent support, trailing three candidates who have not yet entered the race – Mr Biden at 32 per cent, Mr Sanders at 19 per cent and former US congressman Beto O'Rourke of Texas at 11 per cent. REUTERS

Four die in two apartment fires in Spain



Four people died in two separate apartment fires in north-eastern Spain last Saturday, and a baby was among those in critical condition, said firefighters.

The first blaze started in the morning in a 10-storey block of flats in Badalona, about 10km north-east of Barcelona, said firefighters in the Catalonia region.

Three people died, including a 92-year-old woman, the regional government said.

Among those injured were a baby girl who is in a critical condition and two adults. They were in serious condition, the fire service said on its Twitter feed.

Both adults had jumped from windows to escape the blaze.

In a separate fire 18km away in La Lagosta, one person died in a fire in a block of flats, firefighters said.

PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Egyptian policeman killed defusing church bomb

CAIRO • A policeman was killed while trying to dismantle an explosive device outside a Coptic church in Egypt, a security source said.

Two other officers were also wounded in the explosion last Saturday as security personnel attempted to defuse the device in Nasr City, on the edge of Cairo, the source added. The device had been hidden inside a bag that was searched by police. The policeman who was killed, Mr Mustafa Abid, was a specialist in mine clearance.

Coptic Christians, who account for around 10 per cent of Egypt's population, have been targeted in a string of attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group in recent years.

The latest attack comes ahead of Christmas mass yesterday, when President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is due to inaugurate the Cathedral of Nativity in Egypt's New Administrative Capital, 4km east of Cairo. Security has been reinforced in the capital in recent weeks ahead of Christmas, which Egypt's minority Coptic Christians celebrate today.

The country's leader since 2014,

Mr Sisi often presents himself as a defender of Christians against extremists. But activists and some analysts accuse the state of discriminating against them and not providing enough protection.

More than 100 Copts have been killed in militant attacks since December 2016.

ISIS claimed an assault in early November which killed six Copts and one Anglican in the central province of Minya. The police later said that 19 suspected extremist militants linked to the attack had been killed in a shoot-out.

ISIS also killed more than 40 people in twin church bombings in April 2017, and an ISIS gunman in December that year killed nine people in an attack on a church in a south Cairo suburb.

Hundreds of police and soldiers have also been killed in attacks, and three Vietnamese tourists and their Egyptian guide died recently when a home-made bomb exploded on their bus on the outskirts of Cairo.

The country has been under a state of emergency since April 2017. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE



Police officers guarding the street leading to the church in Cairo where the bomb was found last Saturday. PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Poll: More Britons now want to remain in EU, and vote on it

LONDON • More Britons want to remain a member of the European Union (EU) than leave, according to a survey published yesterday which also showed that voters want to make the final decision themselves.

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, but Prime Minister Theresa May is struggling to get her exit deal approved by Parliament, opening up huge uncertainty over whether a deal is possible, or even whether the country will leave at all.

The survey by polling firm YouGov showed that if a referendum were held immediately, 46 per cent would vote to remain, 39 per cent would vote to leave, and the rest either did not know, would not vote, or refused to answer the question.

When the undecided and those who refused to answer were removed from the sample, the split was 54-46 in favour of remaining.

That is broadly in line with other polls in recent months which show a deeply divided electorate, in which opinion has swung slightly towards remaining in the EU.

The 2016 referendum voted 52 to 48 per cent in favour of leaving.

The poll of more than 25,000 voters was commissioned by the People's Vote campaign, which is spearheading an increasingly vocal push for a second referendum on Brexit.

Mrs May has strongly opposed holding a second referendum.

But, the survey showed that 41 per cent thought the final decision about Brexit should be made by a new public vote versus 36 per cent who believe it should be up to Parliament.

Removing those who are undecided, the split was 53 per cent in favour of another referendum and 47 per cent against.

Belgium bans Muslim, Jewish ritual slaughter

New law a sign of larger battle across Europe between animal welfare, religious freedom

ADVICE NOT TAKEN

The government asked for our advice on the ban, we responded negatively, but the advice wasn't taken.



MR SAATCI BAYRAM, a leader of the Muslim community.

MOTIVES UNCLEAR

It is impossible to know the true intentions of people.



SENIOR RABBI YAAKOV DAVID SCHMAHL, in Antwerp.

LAW BEFORE RELIGION

Well, I'm sorry, in Belgium, the law is above religion and it will stay like that.



MS ANN DE GREEF, director of Global Action in the Interest of Animals, a Belgian animal welfare group.

BRUSSELS • A Belgian ban on the Muslim and Jewish ways of ritually slaughtering animals went into effect on New Year's Day – a sign of a larger clash across Europe over the balance between animal welfare and religious freedom.

With both animal welfare advocates and right-wing nationalists pushing to ban ritual slaughter, religious minorities in Belgium and other countries fear that they are the targets of bigotry under the guise of animal protection.

"It is impossible to know the true intentions of people," said Senior Rabbi Yaakov David Schmahl in Antwerp. "Unless people state clearly what they have in mind, but most anti-Semites don't do that."

Laws across Europe and European Union regulations require that animals be rendered insensible to pain before slaughter to make the process more humane.

For larger animals, stunning before slaughter usually means using a "captive bolt" device that fires a metal rod into the brain; for poultry, it usually means an electric shock. Animals can also be knocked out with gas.

But slaughter by Muslim halal and Jewish kosher rules requires

that an animal be in perfect health – which religious authorities say rules out stunning it first – and be killed with a single cut to the neck that severs critical blood vessels.

The animal loses consciousness in seconds, and advocates say it may cause less suffering than other methods, not more.

Most countries and the EU allow religious exceptions to the stunning requirement, though in some places – like Germany and the Netherlands, where a new law took effect last year – the exceptions are very narrow. Belgium is joining Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Slovenia among the nations that do not provide for any exceptions.

Ms Ann De Greef, director of Global Action in the Interest of Animals, a Belgian animal welfare group, said stunning does not conflict with kosher and halal doctrine, and "they could still consider it ritual slaughtering", but the religious authorities refuse to accept that.

"They want to keep living in the Middle Ages and continue to slaughter without stunning – as the technique didn't yet exist back then – without having to answer to the law," she said. "Well, I'm sorry, in Belgium, the law is above religion and it will stay like that."

Belgium, with a population of about 11 million, is home to about 500,000 Muslims and more than 30,000 Jews. Those who adhere to

their religious rules will soon be forced to order their meat from abroad, which community members say will mean paying more, and could even lead to food shortages.

Leaders of both groups said they hope the lawsuits they have filed in Belgium's Constitutional Court might still lift the ban on slaughtering without stunning later this year.

"The government asked for our advice on the ban, we responded negatively, but the advice wasn't taken," said Mr Saatci Bayram, a leader of the Muslim community.

"This ban is presented as a revelation by animal welfare activists, but the debate on animal welfare in Islam has been going on for 1,500 years. Our way of ritual slaughtering is painless," he added.

Mr Joos Roets, a lawyer representing an umbrella organisation of Islamic institutions, said the ban was motivated more by stigmatising certain groups than concerns over animal welfare.

The government could take other steps to reduce animal suffering, "without violating the Belgian freedom of religion and the European regulation regarding this matter".

The idea for the ban was first proposed by Mr Ben Weyts, a right-wing Flemish nationalist and the minister in the Flanders government who is responsible for animal welfare. NYTIMES

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Knives out as Israeli election nears

Alliances crumble, new parties form as candidates envision a post-Netanyahu era

JERUSALEM • With elections just a few months away, candidates are sticking knives in the ribs of their natural allies in hopes of elevating their own chances of succeeding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This week, the Zionist Union, a four-year-old liberal alliance, blew itself up as the Labor Party chief, Mr Avi Gabbay, humiliated veteran politician Tzipi Livni by abruptly breaking with her and her boutique party Hatnuah (The Movement) while television cameras rolled.

Popular ministers Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked abandoned their right-wing party, the Jewish Home, to form a new one – the New Right – that they vowed would be less beholden to religious leaders but would still push to settle the West Bank and oppose a Palestinian state.

And a former army chief of staff, Mr Benny Gantz, barged into the political centre with a vague-sounding new party – Israel Resilience – and a still-to-be-announced set of ideas.

It instantly threatened to siphon off support from more established moderate contenders like Mr Yair Lapid and Mr Moshe Kahlon, as well as another former chief of staff, Mr Moshe Ya'alon.

For the moment, the biggest beneficiary of the infighting appears to be Mr Netanyahu, whose conservative Likud party stands like a giant in Lilliput.

But the atomising parties could come back to haunt him in the April 9 election, said Professor Gideon Rahat, a political scientist at Hebrew University and the Israel Democracy Institute.

A comfortable Likud lead could encourage voters to get behind smaller alternatives – but if too many small parties compete, some could fail to enter Parliament and so could not join a governing coalition.

Mr Netanyahu has a more immediate reason to fear: Israeli Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit is expected to decide in the coming months whether to heed police recommendations that he indict Mr Netanyahu on bribery or other charges arising from three major corruption investigations.

Israeli politics is notoriously turbulent, but the drama-a-day tumult and the suspense over Mr Netanyahu's legal predicament left one columnist comparing the campaign to a television series and wishing only that it could be binge-watched.

Here is a look at the candidates:



Israel's current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is the favourite to win another term, but Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit has indicated he will try to decide whether to indict Mr Netanyahu before the April election. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

BENNY GANTZ AND THE CENTRE

With his movie-star good looks, Mr Gantz has already managed to shake the political centre merely by offering himself up as a candidate.

He is the latest in a string of retired generals to make the leap to politics.

He has divulged nothing about his positions, apparently heeding the advice of those who say that he can only harm himself by taking any. But that strategic ambiguity cannot last



Former army chief of staff Benny Gantz is the latest in a string of retired generals to make the leap to politics.

and there is pressure from the dump-Netanyahu crowd for Mr Gantz to help coalesce a larger and more viable centre-left bloc.



Ms Ayelet Shaked and Mr Naftali Bennett abandoned their right-wing party to form a new one – the New Right – last December. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NAFTALI BENNETT AND AYELET SHAKED

A former commando turned high-tech millionaire, the religious Mr Bennett has been hawkish on national security. The secular Ms Shaked set about curbing the judicial branch and engineering a rightward shift in the Supreme Court's make-up.

But after leading the Jewish Home's amalgam of religious Zion-

ists and Orthodox Jews since 2012, they felt increasingly hemmed in by their radical, rabbinically guided partners.

On Dec 29 last year, they announced the New Right party to appeal to a broader Israeli public, with religious and non-religious Jews as equal partners. They say they support Mr Netanyahu's re-election, but clearly have their eyes on his office once he leaves.

AVI GABBAY AND TZIPI LIVNI

This partnership was always a ticking time bomb.

On Tuesday, it went off. Mr Gabbay, who had floundered since taking over Labor in 2017, was convinced that Ms Livni – in publicly calling for the centre-left to unite, but not necessarily behind Mr Gabbay – had been undermining him.

He got his revenge by inviting reporters to a meeting and then wishing Ms Livni success “in any party you are in”.

His loyalists said it showed he possessed the steel that Israelis expect in their leaders.

But critics said he would never



Mr Avi Gabbay humiliated Ms Tzipi Livni by abruptly breaking with her and her party at a press conference.

have treated a man the same way and he has faced public calls demanding his resignation.

For all her flaws as a politician, Ms Livni could still wind up forming part of a liberal bloc.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU AND LIKUD

The Prime Minister for a decade, Mr Netanyahu is the favourite to win another term. But the Attorney-General has indicated he will try to decide whether to indict Mr Netanyahu before the election.

Meanwhile, younger Likud leaders are jostling for position. Perhaps the most formidable among them is Mr Gideon Saar, a former Likud minister who took a time-out from politics in 2014 and announced his comeback last year. NYTIMES

Trump's 'biggest deal of all time' looks to be a major flop

Gil Yaron
For The Straits Times
In Tel Aviv

It is a sound that Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank have been missing for a long time. But recently they have begun to rejoice about “a different atmosphere”.

“A fresh wind is blowing,” Mr Oded Revivi, mayor of the Efrat settlement and foreign policy spokesman for the Settler Council, told the Israeli news website Ynet.

After years of pressure from the US government to prevent the construction of new housing units in the disputed areas, bulldozers are now roaring through dozens of settlements, levelling hills for new homes.

In Judea and Samaria, the biblical names of the areas that the Palestinians claim for their state, new houses are rising on the hilltops in many Israeli settlements.

Last year, the non-governmental organisation Peace Now documented 3,800 tenders for new projects – the highest number since it began documenting settlement construction in 2002.

The building boom in the West Bank stands in stark contrast to almost complete radio silence from the White House.

When US President Donald Trump took office in 2016, one of his promises was that he would finally bring peace to Israelis and Palestinians, the “biggest deal of all time” to replace 70 years of war.



(From left) Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US President Donald Trump with White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, who is helping to broker a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians. PHOTO: REUTERS

Since then, his son-in-law, Mr Jared Kushner, and special envoy Jason Greenblatt have been working on the ultimate peace plan for the Holy Land, criss-crossing the region and consulting key decision-makers.

But so far, they have little to show for their efforts. Their plan remains unknown, if indeed it exists at all. Only one thing has been made clear by the administration: It will publish the plan only when it believes that it has “maximised its potential for acceptance, execution and implementation”, according to US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman.

Dramatic changes in the Middle East, however, raise the spectre that such an ideal moment will never be found. The contents of Mr Kushner's plan are only known in extremely general terms. Shortly

before she gave up her post last month, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley claimed to have seen it.

It was “things much longer” than previous initiatives and far more “creative”, she said. “It contains much more thoughtful detail. It brings new elements to the discussion, taking advantage of the new world of technology we now live in,” she told a regular session of the Security Council on the Middle East.

Ms Haley contended that there are “things in the plan that every party will like”. Its outcome depends only on whether the response of the warring parties will be different from the ones they gave during decades of failed peace processes.

But a positive reception of Mr Kushner's ideas seems highly unlikely. His attempt to soften Pales-

tinian demands by applying pressure through Arab proxies has failed.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, the linchpin of Mr Kushner's Middle East strategy, has lost part of his diplomatic clout after making many wrong decisions, among them a botched war in Yemen, a futile campaign against his neighbour Qatar, meddling in Syria's civil war and not least, the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul.

Profiting from the Prince's blunders has been Turkey's President Recep Erdogan, who has gained in stature and influence. But this strengthens Palestinian hardliners like the radical Hamas group, Mr Erdogan's ally, who refuses to even recognise Israel's right to exist, let

alone expand its borders.

Palestinian pragmatists, meanwhile, have been weakened by Mr Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital a year ago.

To save face, they have completely broken off contact with Washington and categorically reject any American role as an intermediary, even refusing to receive US representatives in Ramallah. In response, Mr Trump has shut down the offices of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the umbrella organisation of all Palestinians, in Washington and cut hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Ramallah. Palestinians now vow to make sure any American initiative will become a “stillbirth”.

Israel's government is not keen on Mr Kushner's big ideas, either. Late last year, Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon said Washington agreed with Jerusalem to publish the plan early this year.

Mr Kushner himself seemed to confirm this in a rare interview early last month: “We're hopeful in the next couple of months we'll put out our plan, which again not every side is going to love, but there's enough in it, and enough reasons why people should take it and move forward.”

But since then, elections in Israel have been moved forward from November to April. That puts the incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bind. In order to win at the ballots, he needs to woo his right-wing electoral base.

But that will not work if he is

forced to accede to demands for concessions to the Palestinians in any peace plan. Therefore, he will use his considerable influence in the White House to urge Mr Kushner to put his initiative on hold for the time being – at least until after the formation of a government, presumably this summer.

One of his key coalition partners, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, one of Israel's most popular politicians, even advised the US at the end of November to abandon the peace plan altogether. “I want peace like everyone else. But I do not believe that an agreement can be reached. I would tell Trump, ‘Don't waste your time,’” he said.

In light of this, Israel's government does not seem to expect the forthcoming publication of a new peace plan. Last month, it handed out a record 5,618 building permits. Worrisomely, 61 per cent of construction projects are not planned for the large settlement blocks, which even pragmatic Palestinians realise may one day be annexed by Israel in a peace agreement.

Instead, new housing units are to be built in isolated outposts – right in the areas that were supposed to become part of a Palestinian state.

So while Mr Kushner continues to work on a two-state solution, Mr Netanyahu is working to undermine its feasibility. Instead of forging the biggest deal, Mr Trump may present the Middle East with the biggest flop of all time.

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(From left) House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Senator Charles Schumer, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Richard Durbin leaving a meeting with President Donald Trump on Friday. Democrats now have real power to subject Mr Trump to a level of scrutiny that he has never experienced. PHOTO: THE WASHINGTON POST

Rocky road ahead for US President

The stand-off with the Democrats over his Wall project is just one of many major challenges in the new year



Ian Bremmer

Donald Trump enters 2019 locked in a fierce political battle with new House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a fight he will lose.

He cannot force Democrats to apportion money for a wall between the United States and Mexico, but influential conservatives in media threaten to punish him if he retreats. He will eventually find a way to surrender while declaring victory. And then his year will become even more complicated.

Mr Trump's 2019 "to-do" list is formidable, even by presidential standards. He must help restore confidence in the US economy after three months of the worst US stock market meltdown in many years, and he must accomplish this at a time when global economic growth is beginning to look soft.

He must reassure the world that the United States and China are not on a course towards endless trade conflict or a Cold War-scale military confrontation while addressing the genuine security concerns of those who believe China continues to take advantage of the United States, its companies, and its workers. He will need to show real progress towards denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula by persuading North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that he cannot get something for nothing.

He must persuade critics that the vague promises made last year in Singapore hold promise without

allowing Mr Kim to continue with clandestine nuclear development.

He needs to deliver the promised withdrawal of US troops from Syria without appearing to cede power and influence in the Middle East to Russia and Iran – and without leaving Kurds and other allies at the mercy of Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his military.

More importantly, he must execute this retreat without losing whatever confidence the US Defence Department still has in his leadership. He must begin to prepare for re-election. With low approval ratings, growing doubts among his core supporters, and after a loss of historic scale in November's midterm elections, he must discourage any Republican from challenging him for the party's nomination, and he must find a way to break the momentum that Democrats now enjoy.

The obstacles he faces are daunting. China's President Xi Jinping cannot be seen to buckle under Mr Trump's pressure, and China's political and economic system gives the Chinese leader formidable weapons with which to limit damage to China's economy.

Russia's Vladimir Putin can treat Mr Trump as a compromised figure and Europeans who have long called for less reliance on US protections now have the best case for their plans they have ever had. The cost of partnership with Mr Trump is rising for leaders of countries who can afford to ignore him, and an "America First" foreign policy driven by a capricious personality makes the benefits less clear.

Then there are the domestic challenges. Mr Trump was elected in part because he had no experience in government. In that sense, he was the embodiment of change.

The downside for him is that he is

still unsure how government actually works. Not so for Ms Nancy Pelosi, who is as experienced, savvy, and ruthless an adversary as the President could expect to face.

The party Ms Pelosi leads now has real power for the first time since Mr Trump was elected President, and Democrats intend to use that power to subject him to a level of scrutiny Mr Trump has never experienced.

They will subpoena both documents and members of his administration to testify under oath on any number of sensitive subjects, and Mr Trump's patience, poise, and self-confidence will be tested as never before.

Then there is special counsel Robert Mueller, who will continue to lead investigations into nearly every aspect of Mr Trump's public life – his business history, his personal indiscretions, his presidential campaign, his White House, his associates and even his family.

Whether weeks or months away, the report of his findings will shake Washington like nothing we have seen in at least a generation.

The greatest risk for Mr Trump is that Republicans – voters and lawmakers – decide they can no longer afford his leadership.

The daily "outrages" reported by the press and repeated by incredulous Democrats would not sway his most loyal supporters or their elected representatives. But if he comes to be seen as a loser – because foreign leaders are ignoring him, Democrats are thwarting his plans, the economy is turning, and especially if polls begin to signal he cannot win – there is a risk they will abandon him. We are still some distance from that point. Those who underestimate Mr Trump's political instincts are making a mistake.

There have been few figures in American public life who better understand the sources of fear and anger that drive his most reliable followers, and Democrats may well nominate a presidential candidate that pushes Republicans back towards Mr Trump, whatever their misgivings. But 2019 is sure to be the most challenging year of Donald Trump's life.

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• Ian Bremmer is the president of Eurasia Group and author of *Us Vs. Them: The Failure Of Globalism*.

Trump wants a witch hunt. Are Democrats about to give it to him?

Henry Olsen

Republicans warned that Democrats would move to impeach President Donald Trump if they gained control of the House.

And right on cue, a few hours after the new majority took power, freshman Representative Rashida Tlaib from Michigan told a cheering crowd that the House was going to "impeach the m-----."

This was such good news for Mr Trump that you could almost see him excitedly tenting his fingers, muttering "excellent".

Democrats and some of their friends in "Never Trump" land loathe the President. Some hate him so much that they wanted him impeached as soon as he took office.

Every step of the way, they have been tempted by every tale of misdeed and treason that could be tortured from the available facts.

Now they eagerly await special counsel Robert Mueller's report, hopeful that it will contain the proof that would justify what they've wanted to do right from the start.

The majority of Americans, however, are in a much different place. CNN's 2018 exit poll found that 56 per cent of midterm voters opposed impeachment (with 39 per cent in support).

Other polls conducted after the Democrats' resounding midterm election victory found that about a third of Americans want to impeach Mr Trump, with a majority opposed.

Since Democrats won 53 per cent of the House vote, that means, at best, that one in four people who voted for Democrats in the House did not support impeaching Mr Trump.

This likely includes the vast bulk of former Republicans whose party-switching gave Democrats the majority.

These people clearly do not like Mr Trump. But they also respect the customs that have made impeachment an option for use only in clearly extraordinary circumstances.

Political differences, they think, should be dealt with at election time, not by impeachment.

Mr Trump needs to attract some of these voters back to his camp, and an obviously politically motivated impeachment drive is one of the things that could do that.

Indeed, he has already tweeted about this and surely would continue to drive the point home should the effort pick up steam.

Casting him in the role of unjustly accused victim would surely rally and inflame his base while proving persuasive to a good number of people who are not dyed-in-the-wool progressives.

Progressives should remember that Mr Trump did not win because a majority wanted him; he won because millions of people who didn't like either candidate voted for him as the lesser of two

evils.

These "reluctant Trump" voters constituted about 18 per cent of his national vote and well over 20 per cent of his support in the key Midwestern swing states that carried him to triumph.

Following through on a weak impeachment claim could be just the thing to remind these voters what they don't like about Democrats and bring them, again reluctantly, back into Mr Trump's camp.

The progressive hungering for impeachment could also impact the 2020 Democratic nomination race.

One post-election poll showed that 61 per cent of Democrats back impeachment. And a December poll for CNN found a whopping 80 per cent of Democrats favour impeachment even as it found a majority of Americans opposed.

It will be extremely hard for a Democratic candidate to resist these numbers, but backing impeachment could cost that nominee support from the same people who could make him or her president.

Mr Trump has long portrayed the Mueller investigation and efforts to remove him from office as a political witch hunt.

The best thing that could happen to him is for House Democrats to try to impeach him based on evidence that American swing voters find unconvincing.

Ms Tlaib surely detests the President, but moving towards impeachment on the evidence we have now would surely make her one of Mr Trump's best friends.

WASHINGTON POST

• Henry Olsen is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre and author of *The Working Class Republican: Ronald Reagan And The Return Of Blue-Collar Conservatism*.

61%

Percentage of Democrats that back the impeachment of President Donald Trump, according to one post-election poll. And a December poll for CNN found a whopping 80 per cent of Democrats favour impeachment even as it found a majority of Americans opposed.

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No, China is not winning the space race

Adam Minter

Last Wednesday, China successfully landed its Chang'e-4 spacecraft on the Moon's far side – an impressive technological accomplishment that speaks to China's emergence as a major space power.

Understandably, some Chinese scientists are taking a victory lap, with one going so far as to gloat to the New York Times that “we Chinese people have done something that the Americans have not dared try”.

That cockiness speaks to the spirit of great-power competition animating the Chinese space programme.

China is open about the fact that it isn't merely looking to expand human knowledge and boundaries; it is hoping to supplant the United States as the 21st century's dominant space power.

And, if this were still the 1960s, when the American and Soviet

space agencies fiercely competed against one another, China's deep pockets, focus and methodical approach to conquering the heavens might indeed win the day.

But the truth is, thanks to the development of a dynamic, fast-moving American commercial space industry, China is almost certain to be a runner-up for decades to come.

That doesn't mean the People's Republic is not making progress in its attempts to colonise the Moon and turn it into the outer-space equivalent of its South China Sea outposts (an avowed goal of Mr Ye Peijian, head of China's lunar programme).

China will launch a mission to bring back samples from the Moon later this year. Over the next decade, it plans to launch a space station, a Mars probe, asteroid missions and a Jupiter probe, while continuing to develop reusable rockets and other vehicles that will enhance its access to space.

A human mission to the Moon is targeted for 2030, and a permanent

colony by the middle of the century.

By contrast, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's own ambitions seem limited. American astronauts have not left low-Earth orbit since the last Apollo Moon landing in 1972, while the US lost the ability to fly to the taxpayer-funded International Space Station with the retirement of the Space Shuttle.

Too often, new presidents have shifted space priorities, forcing NASA to cancel or reconfigure expensive missions that have been years in the planning. Worse, many members of Congress still view NASA as a tool to deliver wasteful, pork-barrel spending to politically connected constituencies.

But, that hardly describes the entirety of the US space programme. Since the mid-2000s, when Congress authorised the agency to begin cultivating public-private partnerships, NASA's most important role has been as a seed investor and adviser to private space companies.



Visitors looking at a model of the Chang'e-3 lunar probe and the Long March rocket series during an exhibition marking the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening up at the National Museum of China in Beijing. The country's landing of its Chang'e-4 spacecraft on the Moon's far side celebrates its emergence as a major space power. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Push to legalise marijuana ignores its health risks

Alex Berenson

Marijuana seems to be on an unstoppable march to legalisation in the United States. New York and New Jersey are racing to join the 10 states that already allow recreational use of cannabis. Some 65 per cent of Americans favour legalisation, and several potential Democratic candidates for president support ending federal prohibitions on marijuana.

This huge shift in public attitudes comes even though most Americans do not use the drug. Only 15 per cent of people over 12 used it even once in 2017, according to a large federal survey. That year, only 3 million people tried it for the first time.

Instead, the change has been largely driven by decades-long lobbying by marijuana legalisation advocates and for-profit cannabis companies.

Those groups have shrewdly recast marijuana as a medicine rather than an intoxicant. Some have even claimed that marijuana can help slow the opioid epidemic, though studies show that people who use cannabis are more likely to start using opioids later.

Meanwhile, legalisation advocates have squelched discussion of the serious mental health risks of marijuana and THC, the chemical responsible for the drug's psychoactive effects.

As I have seen first-hand in writing a book about cannabis, anyone who raises those concerns may be mocked as a modern-day believer in Reefer Madness, the notorious 1936 movie that portrays young people descending into insanity and violence after smoking marijuana. A strange disconnect has resulted. With large studies in peer-reviewed journals showing that marijuana increases the risk of

psychosis and schizophrenia, the scientific literature around the drug is far more negative than it was 20 years ago.

Comparing two major reports from the National Academy of Medicine, the non-profit group that advises the federal government on health and medicine, makes the difference clear.

In a report in 1999, the academy (then called the Institute of Medicine) reported that “the association between marijuana and schizophrenia is not well understood”. It even suggested the drug might help some people with schizophrenia. But in its next major report on marijuana, released in 2017, the academy reached a very different conclusion: “Cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of schizophrenia and other psychoses; the higher the use, the greater the risk.”

Yet the change in the scientific consensus has gone unnoticed. Americans in general are far more likely to believe the drug is safe, and even medically beneficial, than they once were. As a result, support for legalisation has doubled since 1999.

Making matters worse, the ways Americans use cannabis are changing in ways that further increase its risks. Many older Americans remember marijuana as a relatively weak drug that they used casually in social settings like concerts. They're not wrong.

In the 1970s and 1980s, marijuana generally contained less than 5 per cent THC. Today, the marijuana sold at legal dispensaries often contains 25 per cent THC. Many people use extracts that are nearly pure THC.

As a comparison, think of the difference between a beer and a martini. And though legalisation has not led to a big increase in Americans trying the drug, it has meant that those people who already use it do so far more

frequently.

In 2005, about 3 million Americans used cannabis every day. Today, the figure is 8 million. Put another way, about 1 cannabis user in 5 uses it daily. By contrast, only 1 in every 15 drinkers, about 12 million Americans, consumes alcohol every day.

Scientists must do much more research to understand how cannabis can cause psychosis, and the strength of the link. But hospitals are already seeing the effect of these new-use patterns.

According to the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, in 2006, emergency rooms saw 30,000 cases of people who had diagnoses of psychosis and marijuana-use disorder – the medical term for abuse or dependence on the drug. By 2014, that number had tripled to 90,000.

Federal surveys also show that rates of serious mental illness are rising nationally, with the sharpest increase among people 18 to 25, who are also the most likely to use cannabis.

The surveys and hospital data cannot prove that marijuana has caused a population-wide increase in psychosis, but they do offer intriguing evidence.

I am not a prohibitionist. I don't believe we should jail people for possessing marijuana. But the advocacy community has sharply overstated the level of marijuana-related incarceration. Many people are arrested for marijuana possession, but very few end up imprisoned. California reported in 2013, the most recent year for which this data is available, that only 441 of its 134,000 prisoners were incarcerated for all marijuana-related crimes. If arrests for marijuana possession are a major racial justice concern, the solution is decriminalising possession, turning it into a violation equivalent to

While Mr Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies Corp – or SpaceX – receives the bulk of attention, the commercial space industry now comprises dozens of firms in fields ranging from small satellites to lunar exploration.

The results have been spectacular: By NASA's own estimates, the cost of SpaceX developing its workhorse Falcon 9 rocket was less than 10 per cent of what it would have cost if NASA had done it.

NASA's backing is paying dividends elsewhere, too. In coming weeks, SpaceX will launch uncrewed orbital test flights of its Crew Dragon spacecraft – a capsule designed to deliver US astronauts to the International Space Station.

At least two other companies are looking to launch commercial space stations. Mr Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin is planning an un-crewed Moon landing by 2023 (in line with NASA's lunar goals).

Meanwhile, SpaceX is developing a larger rocket that's scheduled to take tourists around the Moon that same year.

And NASA, keen to encourage more lunar exploration, just announced a partnership with nine companies developing lunar landers, with the first missions set to launch as early as this year.

Of course, space exploration is not just about making money and colonising the Moon. Science, too, remains a motivation, and there the US remains a global leader with a nearly insurmountable lead.

Just last week, the New Horizons probe completed the most distant exploration in history (of a small rock about 6 billion km from Earth), and the Osiris-Rex probe went into orbit around a small asteroid (that it'll sample in 2020).

NASA also has – among other missions – one ongoing mission at Jupiter and four at Mars, a solar probe, and two spacecraft that have entered interstellar space.

Neither China nor any other country has plans to compete with this record of accomplishment, nor do they have the scientific or engineering experience to do so.

As long as the US remains focused on cultivating its commercial space industry and continuing to fund cutting-edge science programmes, it has little reason to fear falling behind.

Better yet, it has a much better chance to attract space scientists and other talent keen to profit from one of the 21st century's most promising growth industries.

China, too, isn't oblivious to the potential of commercial space – it is developing its own industry – but the persistent dominance of China's state sector ensures that its entrepreneurs will spend as much time on politics as propulsion systems. If we're in a new race to the stars, the US remains a good bet to win. BLOOMBERG

littering. But advocacy groups don't view decriminalisation as an acceptable compromise. They want full legalisation, making marijuana a state-regulated and -taxed drug that businesses can sell and profit from.

States that allow recreational marijuana have found that legalisation does not end the black market in unregulated cannabis. But it does lower prices, increase availability and acceptability, and drive up use.

Worse – because marijuana can cause paranoia and psychosis, and those conditions are closely linked to violence – it appears to lead to an increase in violent crime.

Before recreational legalisation began in 2014, advocates promised that it would reduce violent crime. But the first four states to legalise – Alaska, Colorado, Oregon and Washington – have seen sharp increases in murders and aggravated assaults since 2014, according to reports from the FBI. Police reports and news articles show a clear link to cannabis in many cases.

As Americans consider making marijuana a legal drug, it would be wise to remember the choices that fuelled the devastating opioid epidemic.

Decades ago, many of the same people pressing for marijuana legalisation argued that the risks of opioid addiction could be easily managed. A half-million deaths later, we have learnt how wrong they were.

Marijuana's risks are different from opioids', but they are no less real. Let's remember that hard truth as we listen to promises that allowing the use of this drug will do no harm. NYTIMES

• Alex Berenson is the author of the forthcoming book, *Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, And Violence*.

Why my Chinese dad switched from an iPhone to a Huawei

Yuan Ren

I got my first iPhone during Chinese New Year in early 2012. It wasn't anything I'd aspired to own. I was not particularly techie, nor could I afford the brand as a graduate with a starting salary.

But at a dinner with an old friend of my father's, the friend gave me, along with other knick-knacks, an iPhone 4. My gift came with a caveat, however: It was not the sought-after 4S that had caused a frenzy around the country after its release in January. Mine was a simple iPhone 4 – released in 2010, and by then considered already past its prime as a formal gift.

That meant I was almost certainly a secondary or even tertiary receiver of the phone – China's gift-giving culture is all about re-gifting – but back then, the Apple brand carried enough cachet that my father's friend still saw it as good enough to give a close friend's daughter, if not quite prized enough to present to a business partner.

That was back when Apple was still the phone to own for a Chinese person on the make, and when people like my father and his friends – mostly older, and in senior positions in large organisations – were still caught up in the legend of the Apple product, even though most of them, including him, had no idea how to use most of the features.

That didn't matter; it was enough to know that iPhones were “the best”. Their global reputations came with an assurance of both status and quality.

What's happened in the interim? A lot.

When Apple's chief executive Tim Cook warned investors last Thursday that the company was facing slowing sales in China, the wider world seemingly greeted the news that Apple had lost its China mojo with shock. But for those who are smartphone users in China, the news just confirmed what we already knew: China's domestic brands have made huge strides in the years since 2012, creating new features and products that take into account what Chinese users want, for a small fraction of the price.

Apple, meanwhile, has mostly failed to localise or reinvent itself, on the assumption that global cachet would be enough. The home-grown groundswell began with a little-known brand called Xiaomi, which burst onto the scene in the early 2010s as one of the first brands in China to have its own operating system, and it offered high-speed processing on the cheap.

At first it appeared to cater to a completely different market from Apple. Selling entirely online, Xiaomi offered both a low-end model – the Redmi for as low as 699 yuan (then under \$5140) – and a higher-end model that was still far cheaper than the cheapest iPhone (less than 2,000 yuan). But with time, the useful features on Xiaomi products, as well as those of its competitors like Huawei and Oppo, combined with the price, began to outweigh the increasingly limited glamour of the iPhone.

I myself transitioned to a high-end Xiaomi from an iPhone in early 2014 after a young professional friend of mine, who worked in marketing in Shanghai, raved about the Xiaomi Mi Note, which is one of the big-screen models, or “phablets”, that have long been popular in China and East Asia, where many prefer the bigger screens – Huawei's latest measures a whopping 7.2 inches – ideal for taking selfies and watching TV dramas. (Apple released its Plus series in late 2014 with larger handsets, which did send its sales shooting up in China – but also added US\$100 (\$5140) to an already expensive price tag.)

Apple also long resisted the rise of another important local feature: The dual SIM card system, a component that may sound boring but for Chinese people has become essential.

In China, where many young people have never owned laptops, phones have become all-in-one devices – part television, part computer, part phone. Transitioning between two SIM cards on all other cell brands is a seamless process: one card for streaming and downloading at cheaper rates, the other one for making calls.

Growing international tourism has also raised demand for phones that can accommodate a second, foreign SIM – and yet for years, Apple did not budge. The company finally gave in to the dual SIM card in the form of special models for China and Hong Kong last fall.

It is telling that the main example of Apple localising its products to China in the last few years was a special model iPhone that was plated in gold.

First introduced in 2015, it was a clear play for the Chinese market, and was, admittedly, a huge hit on the mainland. Many joked that the gold iPhone was targeted at the “tuhao”, a recent term that roughly translates as “tasteless nouveau riche” and that mockingly refers to the wealthy who feel the need to show off.

The colour was even given the name “tuhao jin,” or “tuhao gold.” But the allure of gold plating – a feature focused not on user experience but aesthetics – goes only so far, it seems. And it may not be enough at this point to keep even the “tuhao” loyal.

Huawei, China's largest smartphone maker by market share, recently overtook Apple to move to second place globally. Its popularity among the wealthy and business class at home has shot up in recent years; its prices have been steadily rising as it shifts focus toward higher-end products.

Many upper-middle-class Chinese who once owned iPhones have since switched to Huawei – including my dad.

As China has moved online en masse, it has, perhaps, surprised some analysts who believed that the drive for high-end brands as status symbols would drive decision-making for years into the future.

It turns out that Chinese consumers care about user experience, too (and price, of course).

But the iPhone has not lost all of its lustre. A civil servant friend of mine was still offered a brand-new iPhone 8 as a “gift” in 2016; I've yet to hear of anyone who was bribed with a Huawei. NYTIMES

• Yuan Ren is a writer and producer from Beijing.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 46 to 53 (Moderate)



PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Warm welcome to China's cool city

A dazzling rainbow-coloured city of ice greeted visitors at the official opening of the 35th Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival on Saturday.

The annual festival draws millions of visitors each year to wintry Harbin in China's north-eastern Heilongjiang province. Organisers estimated about 20,000 visitors attended the festival's opening day.

Over 2,000 ice sculptures are on display, including giant slides, intricately carved castles and towering buildings, as well as animals and cartoon characters.

Sculptors spent 15 days and used some 110,000 cubic m of ice and 120,000 cubic m of snow to set up the venue.

Harbin resident Guan Hongliang, who has been sculpting ice for a decade, told TV news network Euronews that he was pleased to see thousands of visitors admiring his creations.

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C1

BUSINESS

“Partnerships are proliferating across the financial services ecosystem, but only time will tell if these relationships drive sustained value.”

ADELOITTE REPORT C3



Above: Understanding the Asean market better can add value to students because they can learn how business models here evolve differently compared with the US and China, says Economic Development Board managing director Chng Kai Fong. Right: Facebook's new expanded office at Marina One, where a mix of nationalities work alongside each other. PHOTOS: REUTERS, KUA CHEE SIONG

Asean ideal place to grow S'pore talent: EDB chief

Young S'poreans can gain experience, hone skills in region before going farther, he says

Aw Cheng Wei

Young Singaporeans have been urged to consider job opportunities at home or in Asean nations to build up their skills before venturing farther afield.

The call came from Economic Development Board (EDB) managing director Chng Kai Fong, who told a briefing: "Too many students, or too many people, prefer to go to... Silicon Valley or London."

But when they go there, they "have to compete with the very best, and (they) have no inherent advantages".

Mr Chng suggested they start their international careers a bit closer to home: "What we have been trying to do is to encourage students to go to Asean first before going to (United States), London."

For example, the EDB tasked Ngee Ann Polytechnic, among other institutes of higher learning,

last year to create more overseas internship opportunities for students at start-ups or companies in entrepreneurship and innovation as part of a national programme.

As of September last year, the poly has sent around 70 students to intern in start-ups in Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City or Bangkok as part of its Global Entrepreneurship Internship Programme, while around 130 have taken up internships at other start-ups, 43 in Silicon Valley, 13 in Hong Kong and two in London. The programme, which started in 2016, is open to all students regardless of the course they are attending.

Understanding the Asean market better can add value to the students because they can learn how business models here evolve differently compared with the US and China, said Mr Chng, who was speaking at the briefing late last year to mark his first year as EDB chief. He took the reins in October 2017.

"The challenge with Asean is that



(there's) a very diverse crowd... with different, varying developments," he added.

Different countries can thus play different roles, and there is a role for Singapore to play, he noted.

"Our people have to play that role, in terms of understanding Asean, being able to traverse all the (cultures)." He also pointed out that Singapore has "a more developed economy, more rule of law, more institutional trust ... that's a niche we have to carve ourselves in".

The EDB wants to "create a situation where Asean companies or Asean does business with the world through Singapore", Mr Chng said, adding that Singapore now draws investors who are interested in Asean because "we have ancillary services, we have access to talent".

Social media giant Facebook, for example, based its first product engineering team in Singapore to understand the type of products that sell in South-east Asia, and that goes beyond engineering prowess, Mr Chng said.

Facebook employs people from Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar who are in Singapore "to interact with the core team", he said.

"What we have here then is a mix of nationalities, including Singaporeans, and the Singaporeans themselves get exposed to... the best of Asean in that sense, but also the best of the US in terms of product engineering," Mr Chng added.

Singaporeans who are working in technology companies in Silicon Valley are a crowd that Mr Chng

also wants to woo. "We know they don't really come back because over here, in Singapore, the opportunities are not as great," he said.

But "right now, we feel comfortable that we are at a stage where there's enough of a critical mass of good jobs here that we can attract them to come back", he said.

"Part of that is not just the (start-up) companies here, but also the fact that GovTech also is very big, (with the) Smart Nation (initiative)... Hopefully, more (people) will come back."

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What we have here then is a mix of nationalities, including Singaporeans, and the Singaporeans themselves get exposed to... the best of Asean in that sense, but also the best of the US in terms of product engineering.



MR CHNG KAI FONG (right), EDB's managing director, about social media giant Facebook setting up its first product engineering team in Singapore to understand the type of products that sell in South-east Asia. Facebook employs people from Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar who are in Singapore "to interact with the core team", he said.



EDB revamp to boost foreign investments, local enterprises

The Economic Development Board (EDB) has introduced changes in the way it works as it moves to bolster foreign investment and boost local enterprises.

Staff has been sorted into three streams so it can build deeper relationships with companies, better attract promising businesses and generate financing for local start-ups.

The changes "are focused on getting key projects in", said managing director Chng Kai Fong last month, in an interview that rounds up his first year since he was appointed to the role in October 2017.

In the past, the EDB organised itself by industry clusters and "anyone who has an investment interest, they talk to us, we will talk to them", Mr Chng noted. But it has added the streams late last year to better reach its objectives.

One of the new streams aims to "go a little bit deeper for a smaller group of companies that have substantial presence here".

"We want to go beyond discussing projects with them," he said.

Mr Chng noted that he meets heads of companies about twice a year to discuss plans for the next five years.

"With this five-year time frame,

we understand their plans better, and they understand Singapore's value proposition better," he added.

"We exchange views... We have some credibility because we talk to so many companies and... as a result, we can partner different people with... Asean (companies)," he said.

The aim is to get the companies to plan and think about a longer-term investment in Singapore, Mr Chng added.

"Typically, when they come to EDB, they will say, 'oh, I want to build a factory here, what can I get out of this, or how can I get workers?'" he said.

Another stream aims to bring in promising tech companies that are looking to expand in South-east Asia.

Mr Chng said: "I'm trying to bring the next Google, Facebook, Alibaba, people (who) actually think of Asean as a market... I want to be able to facilitate their entry in so that they set up their first presence (here)."

He wants companies to think of Singapore first when they are deciding where to go to expand in Asean, Asia or when they "think about creating new services (and) products

in Asean".

"We are trying to go out there and do a lot more marketing."

The third stream, which Mr Chng says is the most challenging, works with businesses on corporate ventures, with the EDB chipping in to help absorb risk.

It is separate from the Board's investment arm, EDBI.

Corporate ventures are investments companies make in start-ups. It is the missing piece in the vibrant venture capital and start-up market here, he said, adding that the start-ups selected must have a link to Singapore.

Corporations have spent more on research and development and innovation than institutes of higher learning or start-ups, he said. "That's where the power is."

The stream is challenging because corporate ventures are not quite developed here, Mr Chng said.

But ultimately, the hope is that the stream creates an environment for corporate ventures, he said.

"If we are successful in this... then (we) can help companies really create new products and new services."

Aw Cheng Wei

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industrial

MAPLETREE INDUSTRIAL TRUST

(Constituted in the Republic of Singapore pursuant to a trust deed dated 29 January 2008 (as amended))

NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING ("EGM") of the holders of units of Mapletree Industrial Trust ("MIT", and the holders of units of MIT, "Unitholders") will be held on 22 January 2019 (Tuesday) at 2:30 p.m. at 10 Pasir Panjang Road, Mapletree Business City, Town Hall – Auditorium, Singapore 117438, for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, passing, with or without modifications, the following resolution:

ORDINARY RESOLUTION

THE PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF 18 TAI SENG, SINGAPORE WHICH IS AN INTERESTED PERSON TRANSACTION

That:

(i) approval be and is hereby given for the proposed acquisition of 18 Tai Seng, Singapore through the acquisition of all the units of Marina Trust (the "Proposed Acquisition") which are currently held by Mapletree Tai Seng Pte. Ltd. ("MTSPL"), on the terms and conditions set out in the conditional unit purchase agreement (the "Unit Purchase Agreement") dated 13 December 2018 made between DBS Trustee Limited, as trustee of MIT (the "Trustee") and MTSPL, and that the entry into of the Unit Purchase Agreement be and is hereby approved and ratified;

(ii) approval be and is hereby given for the payment of all fees and expenses relating to the Proposed Acquisition; and

(iii) Mapletree Industrial Trust Management Ltd., as the manager of MIT (the "Manager"), any director of the Manager and the Trustee be and are hereby severally authorised to complete and do all such acts and things (including executing all such documents as may be required) as the Manager, such director of the Manager or, as the case may be, the Trustee may consider expedient or necessary or in the interests of MIT to give effect to the Proposed Acquisition and all transactions contemplated under the Unit Purchase Agreement, and in this connection, the board of directors of the Manager (the "Board") be hereby authorised to delegate such authority to such persons as the Board deems fit.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

Mapletree Industrial Trust Management Ltd.

(Company Registration No. 201015667D)

As Manager of Mapletree Industrial Trust

Wan Kwong Weng

Joint Company Secretary

Singapore

4 January 2019

Important Notice:

1. A Unitholder who is not a Relevant Intermediary entitled to attend and vote at the EGM is entitled to appoint one or two proxies to attend and vote in his/her stead. A proxy need not be a Unitholder. Where a Unitholder appoints more than one proxy, the appointments shall be invalid unless he/she specifies the proportion of his/her holding (expressed as a percentage of the whole) to be represented by each proxy.

2. A Unitholder who is a Relevant Intermediary entitled to attend and vote at the EGM is entitled to appoint more than one proxy to attend and vote instead of the Unitholder, but each proxy must be appointed to exercise the rights attached to a different Unit or Units held by such Unitholder. Where such Unitholder appoints more than one proxy, the appointments shall be invalid unless the Unitholder specifies the number of Units in relation to which each proxy has been appointed in the Proxy Form (as defined below).

"Relevant Intermediary" means:

(a) a banking corporation licensed under the Banking Act, Chapter 19 of Singapore, or a wholly-owned subsidiary of such a banking corporation, whose business includes the provision of nominee services and who holds Units in that capacity;

(b) a person holding a capital market services licence to provide custodial services for securities under the Securities and Futures Act, Chapter 289 of Singapore, and who holds Units in that capacity; or

(c) the Central Provident Fund Board ("CPF Board") established by the Central Provident Fund Act, Chapter 36 of Singapore, in respect of Units purchased under the subsidiary legislation made under that Act providing for the making of investments from the contributions and interest standing to the credit of members of the Central Provident Fund, if the CPF Board holds those Units in the capacity of an intermediary pursuant to or in accordance with that subsidiary legislation.

3. The instrument appointing a proxy or proxies (the "Proxy Form") must be deposited at the office of MIT's Unit Registrar, Boardroom Corporate & Advisory Services Pte. Ltd., 50 Raffles Place, #32-01 Singapore Land Tower, Singapore 048623 not later than 2:30 p.m. on 19 January 2019 (Saturday) being 72 hours before the time fixed for the EGM.

Personal data privacy:

By submitting an instrument appointing a proxy(ies) and/or representative(s) to attend, speak and vote at the EGM and/or any adjournment thereof, a Unitholder (i) consents to the collection, use and disclosure of the Unitholder's personal data by the Manager and the Trustee (or their agents) for the purpose of the processing, administration and analysis by the Manager and the Trustee (or their agents) of proxies and representatives appointed for the EGM (including any adjournment thereof) and the preparation and compilation of the attendance lists, minutes and other documents relating to the EGM (including any adjournment thereof), and in order for the Manager and the Trustee (or their agents) to comply with any applicable laws, listing rules, regulations and/or guidelines (collectively, the "Purposes"), (ii) warrants that where the Unitholder discloses the personal data of the Unitholder's proxy(ies) and/or representative(s) to the Manager and the Trustee (or their agents), the Unitholder has obtained the prior consent of such proxy(ies) and/or representative(s) for the collection, use and disclosure by the Manager and the Trustee (or their agents) of the personal data of such proxy(ies) and/or representative(s) for the Purposes, and (iii) agrees that the Unitholder will indemnify the Manager and the Trustee in respect of any penalties, liabilities, claims, demands, losses and damages as a result of the Unitholder's breach of warranty.

Commentary

Asian bonds, currencies power ahead

Fertile ground for high-quality gains as US dollar strength and trade war likely to ease

Angus Hui
and Julia Ho

For The Straits Times

The United States spent much of last year exceeding expectations. Growth was stronger than expected. Interest rates rose more rapidly than expected, leading to a stronger-than-anticipated US dollar.

In combination, these factors have created much angst for Asian bond markets, resulting in negative performance.

At the same time, the region has had to grapple with a slowing Chinese economy, mostly as a result of the country's efforts to reduce debt in the financial sector over the past two years. That is to say nothing of the trade war with the US, which has weighed on domestic business confidence and dominated headlines.

Asian currencies and higher yielding bond markets – such as the Philippines, India and Indonesia – are more vulnerable to US dollar funding, and took the brunt of the repricing. Consequently, while

valuations for the region have become more attractive, fundamentals have remained solidly intact. Going into 2019, we expect the US dollar strength to wane, easing pressure on Asian currencies. This is especially true for India, Indonesia and the Philippines that have struggled the most last year, even though the outlook on global growth remains uncertain and China may slow further still.

The pause in the upward US dollar trend should provide breathing space for the central banks in Asia to adjust monetary policy to limit any further downside to growth or currency weakness.

With regard to China, we believe it would be positive for the Chinese bond market if policymakers continue to engage in further reserve ratio requirement cuts and provide further targeted stimulus to stabilise growth.

We expect these policy actions – such as further reserve ratio requirement cuts – would support the Chinese economy in early 2019. This should in turn be a positive for other countries dependent on trade with China in the region.

TRADE WAR CEASEFIRE?

The ongoing trade war between US

and China is not likely to see a resolution soon. However, tensions appear to have eased slightly. Both sides seem eager to limit the trade war's negative impact on growth of their respective economies.

We believe this paints a constructive backdrop for Asian currencies and local currency sovereign bond markets, as markets are still pricing in a deterioration of the situation.

In terms of US dollar-denominated (hard currency) credit markets, trade-related tensions may have slowed the strong economic growth witnessed in 2017. However, it is worth noting that a large part of the Asian US dollar-denominated credit universe comprises issuers that do not have export-driven businesses.

We expect domestic conditions across a large swathe of the emerging Asian universe – China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand – to continue to power ahead this year.

The flip side of this is of course that the more export-oriented economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan could experience a slowdown.

Hence, performance is likely to be differentiated among countries in the region given the differing economic dynamics. With less pressure from a rising US dollar and the likelihood of much more gradual

US monetary policy normalisation from here, regional Asian central banks are likely to ease off on their monetary policy tightening bias. This should then ease the cost of funding pressures for corporates in their local markets.

FUNDAMENTAL STRENGTH KEY TO RETURNS

Credit fundamentals of investment grade Asian economies continue to be robust. Most have strong reserves and fiscally prudent policies that should enable them to continue to weather volatile macroeconomic conditions.

Similarly, we expect credit fundamentals for US dollar-denominated investment grade corporate bonds to remain robust with South-east Asian companies likely to hold up better than their North Asian counterparts.

Across both the investment grade and high-yield space, credits with solid fundamentals have seen a significant weakening in prices due to numerous factors (the oil price, Fed guidance, policy risk and so on) and could be a good place for investors to look for positive medium to long-term returns.

We see a number of opportunities in Indonesian and Chinese high-yield companies. Within the US dollar-denominated high-yield universe, Chinese property issuers constitute the largest part of the market and we expect to see a

divergence in credit fundamentals among these issuers as a tougher operating environment separates the strong from the weak due to refinancing concerns.

However, increasing evidence of Chinese policy support to address these concerns should help boost investor confidence and see sentiment improve as we progress through 2019.

The realities of quantitative easing in Europe ending means investors are likely to remain relatively cautious in the new year. That said, we also doubt an extreme "risk off" scenario will develop, as signals that portend a global recession remain largely absent.

In the coming year, our focus will be to emphasise selectivity and pick countries and companies with robust balance sheets that have wide access to financing channels.

With yields ranging from 2 per cent to 9 per cent across the credit quality spectrum in US dollar and Asian currencies, and the increasing possibility of a peak in US rates, we believe that Asian bonds provide fertile ground for investors seeking high-quality capital gain and yield this year.

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• Mr Angus Hui is head of Asian & emerging market credit, fixed income, at Schroders, while Ms Julia Ho is its head of Asian macro, fixed income.

3 key takeaways

The US dollar's strength is expected to fade this year as the pace of US rate hikes begins to slow, which will ease the pressure on Asian bonds this year.

- The Asian bond market was hurt last year by robust US growth and a more hawkish Federal Reserve, but this headwind should fade in the coming year.
- The US-China trade war remains a risk to watch but opportunities are still present. Country and credit differentiation will be key.
- Corporate bonds from a number of robust issuers with strong balance sheets have fallen in prices last year, and this provides a number of opportunities.

Japanese lining up yesterday to offer prayers on the first business day of the year at Kanda Myojin, a Shinto shrine in Tokyo. The Japanese currency not only surged almost 4 per cent against the US dollar on Thursday, but it also clocked its best month in about two years. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



Commentary

In this mess of a market, safe havens are making a comeback

The remarkable thing about the yen's recent performance may not be its almost 4 per cent surge against the US dollar on Thursday, but the fact that the Japanese currency just clocked its best month in about two years.

That exact statistic also applies to gold, which in December notched the largest jump since January 2017.

Both assets have continued to climb. Meanwhile, bonds of Group of Seven governments had their best December in a decade, according to a Bank of America Merrill Lynch index.

Put simply, traditional havens are back. The same myriad of drivers bedeviling equity investors this year is also sending them to safety.

While the trade war is showing up in real-world data, it's cropping up in company earnings too, as evidenced by Apple's guidance cut on Wednesday.

At the same time, the Federal

Reserve's tightening is sapping liquidity and in the process reigniting volatility in markets.

Idiosyncratic risks from the likes of Brexit and Italy's budget squabble with the European Union are merely compounding the risk-off mood – and adding fuel to the haven trade.

"There are so many worries to investors at the moment – global economic slowdown, China, US shutdown, Brexit, political risk," said investment strategist Charles St-Arnaud at Lombard Odier Asset Management in London.

"On top of that, performance has been weak and volatility has increased for most asset classes. So it is understandable that some investors are going to safer havens to wait for some clarity."

Apple's gloomy update, which it blamed on weaker China demand, was cited by some as a factor in the yen's wild jump during the Asian

Havens are back in vogue "at the moment with uncertainty about equities and the US government shutdown", said Ms Georgette Boele, a currency and precious metals strategist at ABN Amro Bank. The (yen) appears to have more upside potential – it's among the most undervalued in the Group of 10 against the dollar, based on the OECD's purchasing power parity measure.

morning trade. While thin liquidity amplified the move and the currency went on to trim a large chunk of the gains, it was still well up on the day and was poised to rise for the 14th time in 17 sessions.

"Weakness in Asian stocks has resulted in sharp yen buying in thin trade," said Ms Georgette Boele, a currency and precious metals strategist at ABN Amro Bank in Amsterdam.

Havens are back in vogue "at the moment with uncertainty about equities and the US government shutdown", she said.

The currency appears to have more upside potential – it's among the most undervalued in the Group of 10 against the dollar, based on the OECD's purchasing power parity measure. That's a contrast with 2011, when the yen was overvalued by about 30 per cent according to the same gauge. Sentiment towards gold also

brightened in mid-October, when money managers abandoned their record net-short position against the metal as the outlook for the dollar deteriorated.

Since then, investors have piled into exchange-traded funds backed by bullion, which have amassed 126 tonnes of metal worth US\$5.2 billion (S\$7 billion) in 60 sessions – the biggest increase over a comparable period in more than 18 months.

A paring of expectations for rate hikes has also contributed to demand, as gold typically falls during periods of monetary tightening because it's a non-interest bearing asset.

"Gold is bid due to multiple headwinds" for the world economy, said Mr Ole Hansen, the head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank. "Stocks, the dollar and bond yields are all down while the risk of further US rate hikes has almost been removed."

Benchmark US Treasury yields have dropped almost 70 basis points since early November as fears of slowing American growth are compounded by trade concerns and the partial government shutdown over President Donald Trump's border wall plans.

The iShares 20-year Treasury exchange-traded fund, ticker TLT, saw a record one-day inflow on Wednesday. More than US\$1.1

billion poured into the fund, which invests in longer-dated US government bonds.

"Safe havens should continue to outperform this year as a slowdown in the US prompts the Fed to end its tightening cycle in the middle of the year and China's economy continues to lose momentum," said economist Simona Gambarini at Capital Economics in London.

The risk-off bid is also on display in Europe, where German 10-year yields are around their lowest in 26 months – confounding last year's bearish forecasts. Investors are increasingly pessimistic about the region's economy and have pushed expectations for the European Central Bank's first interest rate hike since 2011 into the middle of next year.

"The rally in the core-EU markets is overdue, but given both the economic and political uncertainty dominating the markets at the moment, the risk is that yields will continue to decline," said Danske Bank chief analyst Jens Peter Sorensen.

The region's primary bond market is also sounding a cautious note this year, with issuance dominated by the least-risky types of borrowing, such as covered bonds and securities from AAA-rated organisations like the European Investment Bank. BLOOMBERG

MarketsInsight

All eyes on China-US trade talks in Beijing

Region, including S'pore, to see slew of economic data this week

Navin Sregantan

Investors looking to a positive start to the year were instead greeted by weak Chinese purchasing managers' index figures which fed into mounting growth concerns and sent more investors erring on the side of caution.

Apple's lowered forecasts did not help either, placing markets in further peril in the mid-week on the back of a low liquidity environment as Japanese markets were closed.

Perhaps, good news comes to those who wait as Friday's confirmation of the resumption of formal talks between US and Chinese officials saw most Asian markets post gains on the day.

Meanwhile, a strong US jobs data release on the same day saw the US

economy add 312,000 jobs last month, suggesting continued strength in the US economy.

This sent US markets closing higher on Friday, ending the week on a positive note.

On the strong jobs report showing, FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunga said that it definitely "provides an argument for the data dependent Fed to raise interest rates".

However, he added: "Concerns over the US experiencing an economic slowdown still remains on the mind of many investors and this continues to be reflected in the US dollar's overall price action."

"While the Dollar Index could appreciate further in the near term as investors relish the blowout jobs report, upside gains may face headwinds down the road."

But most attention this week will be firmly on what commentators hope will be progress towards better US-China trade relations, as the US government delegation led by Deputy US Trade Representative

Jeffrey Gerrish will be in Beijing today to talk trade with China.

This has so far fuelled hopes of a lift for stock markets this week, IG market strategist Pan Jingyi said.

"Whether we would be receiving a meeting conclusion at this stage of discussion remains uncertain. That said, considering the extended truce period of 90 days, having no news could perhaps be taken equally as good news for the two-day meeting," she added.

The Singapore economic docket for the week is relatively light, with last month's foreign reserve figures out today and November's retail sales figures due on Friday.

In its weekly outlook, the UOB global economics and markets research team said that much of the focus domestically will be political, with Singapore and Malaysia's foreign ministers scheduled to meet in Singapore tomorrow on the current maritime and airspace disputes between the two countries.

A slew of key economic data re-

leases for last month will be out in China this week. These include today's foreign reserves data, and producer price index and consumer price index (CPI) figures on Thursday, among others.

UOB said: "Visibly missing is China's December trade data which is scheduled to be released only on Jan 14 - the latest release date since at least 2009."

Down Under, November trade data will be out tomorrow and November retail sales figures are due on Friday.

In Taiwan, last month's trade figures are due today while the December CPI is scheduled to be released tomorrow.

Across the Causeway, November industrial production numbers will be out on Friday.

There are no central bank monetary policy decisions to be made in the Asia-Pacific region this week.

In Europe, November trade data will be released this week for Britain, Germany and France.

In the US, last month's CPI is scheduled to be released on Friday but it might be delayed if the US government shutdown continues. Meanwhile, last month's Federal Open Market Committee minutes will be out mid-week.

The US earnings season kicks off on Wednesday with market commentators paying attention to a number of major US financial institutions reporting their earnings on Jan 14.

navinsre@sph.com.sg

OnTheMove

SoftBank

SoftBank Group hired veteran Hiroki Kimoto from Goldman Sachs to lead a newly created investment unit, people familiar with the matter said. According to them, Mr Kimoto, an 18-year veteran of Goldman, joined SoftBank last Friday, reported Bloomberg News.

Representatives of SoftBank and Goldman Sachs declined to comment on Mr Kimoto and any potential new business structure.

The 41-year-old's hiring is the latest move by chairman Masayoshi Son to transform the Tokyo-based company into a technology-focused investor with initiatives such as the near-US\$100 billion (\$\$136 billion) Vision Fund.

Mr Kimoto, whose last title was managing director of the Asian Special Situations Group in the Securities Division, helped Goldman Sachs invest in Japanese golf courses, hot springs and distressed assets. He joined the New York-based bank in 2001 after graduating from Keio University.

Luzhou Bio-Chem Technology

Luzhou Bio-Chem Technology has appointed director of finance Koh Pee Keat as its new chief financial officer (CFO) with effect from Jan 1.

As CFO, Mr Koh will be responsible for the accounting, financial reporting and other financial functions of the group. Mr Koh had previously held the director of finance role since joining Luzhou Bio-Chem in July 2008.

Before joining the company, he was senior vice-president and chief financial officer of Westcomb Financial Group from 2003 to 2007. He was also a senior vice-president at Bexcom assisting the chief financial officer between 2000 and 2002, and was a vice-president at DBS Bank from 1982 to 2000.

China Star Food Group

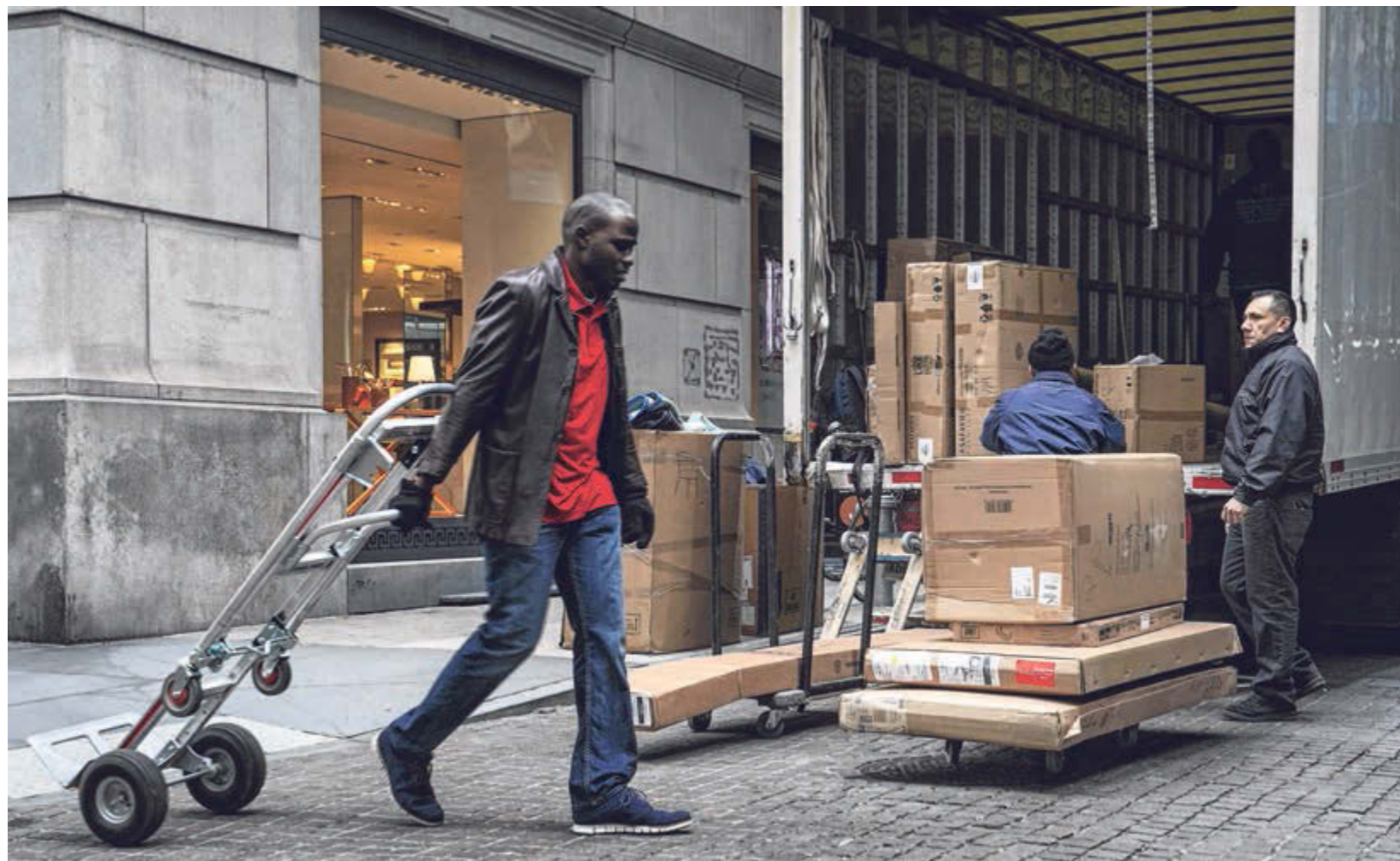
Catalist-listed snack producer China Star Food Group (CSFG) has redesignated its chief financial officer (CFO) Yeo Choon Tat, 65, as its deputy chief executive officer with effect from Jan 3. Mr Yi Ming, formerly the CFO of home improvement company SSLJ.com, has been appointed CFO with effect from the same date.

Mr Yeo will be responsible for the company's Singapore office operations, and his tasks will include overseas business development, fundraising, merger and acquisition activities and investor and investment analyst relations.

He has been the company's CFO since May 2017 and had taken on the post of deputy CEO from December 2016 to May 2017.

Mr Yi, 38, who is from China, will be responsible for the supervision of the group's financial reporting, management of the finance team, compliance matters and reviewing internal controls.

Mr Yi was CFO of SSLJ.com from July 2018 till December 2018, and CFO of debit and credit card developer Wave Sync Corp from 2011 to 2018.



Workers unloading a truck in New York City. The US economy added 312,000 jobs last month, suggesting continued strength in the economy. The attention this week will be on whether talks in Beijing lead to progress in US-China trade relations. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Banks partnering fintechs in quest for digital dominance

There is a power play ahead for Singapore banks as they cosy up to fintechs that offer quicker ways to scale and deepen their customer reach.

But the quest for digital dominance in the next few years through partnerships will hinge on whether fintechs will be pinched by funding constraints and how they and the bank manage an era of uneasy data alliances, analysts said.

One aspect of the strategy came clear last year when DBS and UOB

linked up with ride-hailing app partners that are evolving into fintechs - a cluster attracting premium valuations.

UOB will become Grab's preferred banking partner. The bank has set up a channel into the GrabPay wallet so UOB customers can top up funds from their account - a move that may make credit-card top-ups less relevant if this option takes off. DBS has linked up with Indonesian firm Gojek, but the focus thus far has been on promises of promo codes.

Mr Badrinath Ramanathan, Singapore-based partner at McKinsey & Co, said that on the face of it, fintech partnerships could be a credible and stronger alternative to building a standalone digital bank, an option traditional banks are simultaneously exploring.

Such partnerships open up payment channels while generating a wealth of data that could lead to lending and other forms of financing later.

But Mr Ramanathan warned that

the partnership needs to address sensitive issues such as value sharing, ownership of the customer relationship, data and intellectual property sharing, and customer privacy.

Indeed, the short-term opportunities from data partnerships could bring "unfavourable" relationships once partners become dependent on the data flows, said a Deloitte report.

"Partnerships are proliferating across the financial services ecosystem, but only time will tell if these relationships drive sustained value," it said.

"We observe that data partnerships are in the early stages of being formed, but are not yet at the stage where tensions have major impact."

"By positioning themselves as the critical link across the ecosystem,

firms can turn other participants into commoditised service providers.

Tensions arising from this may limit the longevity of emerging alliances."

Banks' other power play may come in the form of blessings from tighter monetary conditions. As the cost of capital starts to rise as interest rates normalise, bargaining power may begin to tip in favour of traditional financial firms over fintechs that may have burnt through cash to secure their market.

Mr Norman Villamin, UBP's chief investment officer, private banking, said: "Where the balance of power shifts is when the tech guys become funding-constrained, creating a similar playing field. At that point, who would generate the better return for

the same dollar?"

As shifts in business models and funding collide, incumbents such as banks can snap up fintechs that help to make up a few years of organic development of tech capabilities, analysts said. That would translate essentially to a grab for valuable patents owned by fintech firms.

This would bring much-needed growth in revenue, so banks can make a convincing case of growth through technology, rather than using technology to reduce costs alone.

"There is a limit to how much you can command a premium by cost-cutting," added Mr Villamin.

"Is that a viable way to transition? Yes. But at some point in the future, you'd need to have some top line driver."

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

PRESENTED BY **UBS**

The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee
Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.

FINALIST

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

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Xtrackers II

Australia Government Bond UCITS ETF	IC	29/12/2018	233.13	AUD
Carzone Government Bond UCITS ETF	IC	29/12/2018	264.20	USD
US Treasuries Inflation-Linked UCITS ETF	IC	29/12/2018	274.11	USD
US Treasuries UCITS ETF	IC	29/12/2018	212.42	USD
Singapore Government Bond UCITS ETF	IC	29/12/2018	142.22	SGD

DB Platinum

Commodity Euro	R1C	27.12.18	72.70	EUR
Commodity Euro	R1C	27.12.18	7773.57	EUR
Commodity USD	R1C-B	27.12.18	3.75	USD
Commodity USD	R1C-C	27.12.18	3.18	SGD
Commodity USD	R1C	27.12.18	9702.01	USD

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Youth page

Selvaraju embarks on helping youths overcome challenges

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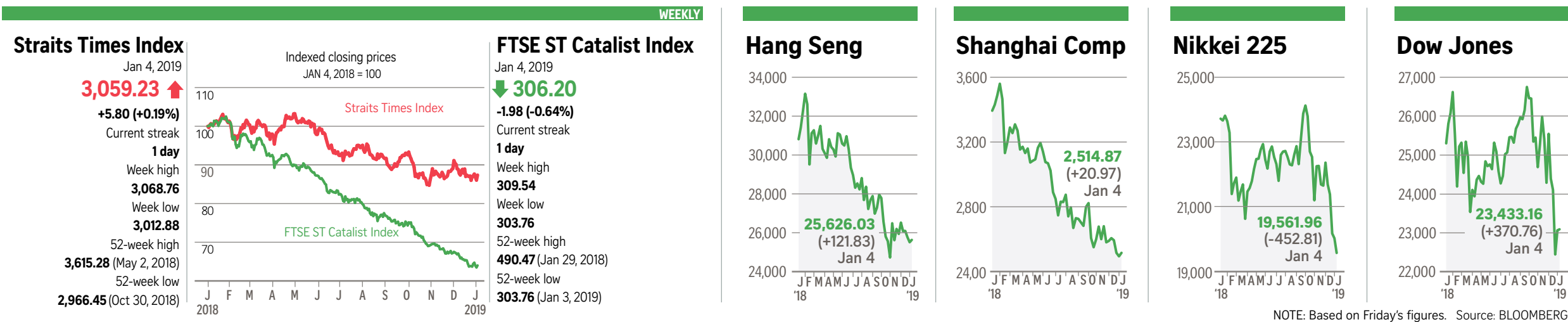
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OBITUARIES


Om Sai Ram

THALAI THEVASAM
1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of




M S MANIAM
Departed on 22/12/2017


Deeply missed & always remembered by
Beloved wife Gouri Maniam, Family & Friends.

Athma Shanthi Pooja will be held on
Wednesday, 9/1/2019, 7pm at Sri Sivan Temple, Geylang East.

Please treat this as a personal invitation.

“...Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom
I have believed, and am convinced that he is able
to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.”
2 Tim 1:12

Our Deepest Condolences to
**Bishop Rennis Ponniah and
Revd Jeremy Ponniah and Family,**
On the loss of their Beloved Father




Mr Dravium D. Ponniah
Called Home to the Lord on 5 January 2019

With love from:

The Bishops (active and retired), Clergy,
Standing Committee and Laity of
the Diocese of Singapore
(the Anglican Church)

*“Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious,
merciful and righteous... his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.”
Ps 112:4, 7b*



Draviam Devanayagam Ponniah
Age: 93


was promoted to the Father's glory
by the Lord Jesus Christ on 5 January 2019.
*Forever remembered for his selfless love in so many ways,
his sunshine smile in every setting and
his steadfast faith in Almighty God.*
Wife: Elizabeth Sundaraj née Ponniah

<p>Late Father: William Henry Ponniah</p> <p>Sons: Rennis Solomon Ponniah Andrew Jeyapaul Ponniah Jeremy Peter Ponniah</p> <p>Grandchildren: Renita Amaris Ponniah Amaria Janoah Ponniah Abraham Jedediah Ponniah Johanan Dravium Ponniah Cara Elizabeth Ponniah Brennan Luke Ponniah Alyssa Anne Ponniah Bryan Alexander Ponniah Caleb Ponniah Jana Ponniah</p>	<p>Late Mother: Lydia Ponniah</p> <p>Daughters-in-law: Amirtham Caldwell Karen Kwee Sim Yee Peng</p> <p>Spouses: David Barbour Ashish Ben Natalie Pena</p> <p>Great-Grandson: Josiah Norman Barbour</p> <p>Nephew-in-care: Charles Akrokiasamy (Selva)</p>
---	---

Sisters, relatives and all loved ones.
Wake at 4 Bishopsgate, Singapore 249970
on Monday 7 January 2019 from 10.00am onwards
with night Thanksgiving Service at 7.30pm.
Funeral service at St Andrew's Cathedral on Tuesday
8 January 2019 at 12.30pm, followed by burial
at Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery at 3.00pm.

**With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolences to**

The family of the late



TONY FONG BAN YEW
departed on 4 January 2019

From

The Management & Staff of
Reflex-O Recreations Pte Ltd
Active Lifestyle Pte Ltd
(Group of Companies)

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in
the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:6*



Agatha Lui Kum Kiew
Age: 80

Was called home to be with the Lord on 5 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.
Husband: Phua Tek Lum

<p>Sons: Anthony Phua Peck Khui Ivan Phua Peck Huat</p> <p>Daughters: Cecilia Phua Peck Hee Dolores Phua Peck Ping</p> <p>Grandsons: Zeng Jixuan Joel Soejanto Joshua Soejanto</p> <p>Granddaughters: Magdelene Phua Hwee Qi Amber Phua Rui Min</p>	<p>Daughter-in-law: Lee Sea Ming</p> <p>Sons-in-law: Chan Suan Liang Dharmo Soejanto</p> <p>Granddaughter-in-law: Loo Chuan Lin</p> <p>Great-Grandsons: Nathanael Zeng Alexander Zeng</p>
---	---

And all relatives and friends.
Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 2, Regency Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.
Night service on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Wednesday 9 January 2019
at 11.45am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 12.45pm.

“Om Namah Shivaya”




K. SUSHILA DEVI
Wife of Late
N. Navaneetham (Muthu)
passed away peacefully on
6/1/2019 leaving behind
brothers, sisters,
brothers-in-law,
sisters-in-law,
nephews, nieces,
grand children,
relatives and friends.
Sushila is resting at
Block 601, #07-244
Elias Rd, S'pore 510601.

Cortege leaves on
Monday 7/1/2019 at 5pm
for Mandai Crematorium
Hall 4 for cremation
at 6.30pm. Tel: 64451079

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of

Yap Gek Chwee




Age: 96

Wife of the late Tan Geok Swee

<p>Mother of: Agnes Florence Grace (deceased) Dennis</p> <p>Grandmother of: Cheryl, Terence & Zhaoqi, Nathan and Joel</p> <p>Godmother of: June Wee, Michael & Joanne Foo and Deirdre Johnson</p> <p>Lovingly cared by: Ratna and Lia</p>	<p>Mother-in-law of: Paul</p> <p style="text-align: center;">June</p>
---	--

Loved and cherished by all relatives and friends.
Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 5, Citrine Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.
Cortege leaves on Wednesday 9 January 2019 at 8.00am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 9.00am.
*No wreaths please.
All donations will be channelled to charities.*



LEE FUI HENG ERIC
Age: 76

was called home to be with the Lord on 5 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.
Wife: Tiah Wee Keow

Daughter:
Valerie Lee


Son:
Terence Lee

Daughter-in-law:
Evelyn Tan

Grandchildren: Lauretta Lee, Isaac Lee,
Mattheus Lee and Mitchell Ong

Brother, sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces.
Wake is held at Blk 114 Serangoon North Ave 1,
Singapore 550114.
Night service on Monday 7 January 2019 at 8pm.
Cortege leaves on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at 8am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 9am.

In Loving Memory



D. RETNASAMY
Departed 7 Jan 1998

His memory
is as dear today,
As in the hour
he passed away.

Sadly missed and
fondly remembered by
Wife, Daughters,
Sons-in-law,
Grandchildren and
all loved ones


IN LOVING MEMORY OF





AW KIM SWEE TAN GIM TEE
Departed : 7 January 1962 Departed : 8 January 2002

*Their memories are still dear to us today;
Throughout the time they have been away.*



**Naidu Joseph
(Bala)**
Age: 73

Was called home to be with the
Lord on 6 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly
remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Nadason Silva Ranne

Sons: Eswaran Joseph
Sasicharan Joseph (deceased)

Grandchildren: Shameera & Ajit

**Brothers, Sisters,
Brothers-in-law, Sisters-in-law,
Nieces and Nephews
and all Relatives and Friends**
Wake is held at Blk 14 Toh Yi Drive
#05-35, Singapore 590014.
Details will be announced
at the wake.
Tel: 9003 5697



K. Sashi
Age: 73


Passed away peacefully on
6 January 2019, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.

Wife: P. Manoor Mani


Children & Spouses:
S.V. Maala (Sashi)
Subash & Sumathi
Vasanthi & Arun

Grandchildren:
Nixit, Preeti, Ingrid and Joanne

**All relatives and friends
from Singapore and Kerala**
Acha is resting at Block 79E
Toa Payoh Central #18-63,
Singapore 315079.
Cortege leaves on Tuesday
8 January 2019 at 5.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 6.30pm.
Tel: 9788 1037 / 9071 3221



Anbe Sivam



**Palanisamy
s/o Veeriah
(Palani / Pandian)**
Age: 58

Passed away peacefully on
6 January 2019, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.

Beloved Wife:
Rajeshwari d/o Thangasami

Daughter & Son-in-law:
Santhiya & Alan Bright

Son: Vedeshwar

**Siblings, in-laws,
relatives and friends.**
Appa is resting at Block 860
Yishun Avenue 4 #05-135,
Singapore 760860.
Cortege leaves on Monday
7 January 2019 at 3.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 4.15pm.



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BRONZE AT JUNIOR
WORLD CUP C6



Anas Bani Yaseen expressing his delight after scoring what proved to be the winner in Jordan's 1-0 upset win over defending Asian Cup champions Australia in their Group B opener yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Asian Cup 2019

SOCCCEROOS STUMBLE

Australia's Asian Cup defence off to horror start with shock defeat by underdogs Jordan

GROUP B

Australia 0
Jordan 1

AL AIN • Australia coach Graham Arnold was defiant against criticism that his side were unable to create chances, after the Socceroos made the worst possible start to the defence of their Asian Cup crown yesterday with a 1-0 defeat by unfancied Jordan.

The Aussies, who won the title on home soil four years ago, domi-

nated for long spells but failed to find a way to cancel out Anas Bani Yaseen's header in the Group B clash at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in the United Arab Emirates.

"We gave away a sloppy goal and started slowly but, in the second half, we totally controlled the game and, on any other day, we could have scored and won the game," Arnold insisted after the match.

He also dismissed the suggestion that his side's approach to the game was arrogant, having previously stated that he expected his side to

NOT TIME TO PANIC YET

We gave away a sloppy goal and started slowly but, in the second half, we totally controlled the game and, on any other day, we could have scored and won the game.



GRAHAM ARNOLD, Australia coach, insists his side played well despite the defeat by 109-ranked Jordan.

beat the Jordanians.

The 55-year-old added that the Socceroos will "dust ourselves off, recover well and mentally prepare" for the next game against Palestine.

While he remained defiant, his captain Mark Milligan admitted that nerves got the better of the team.

"The start of the game was lethargic, maybe a few nerves," he said. "It's the first time in a tournament situation for some of the boys."

Vital Borkelmans' Jordan, who are 68 places behind the Aussies (41st) in the Fifa world rankings, were resolute in defence.

The Socceroos went into half-time trailing by a goal and were fortunate not to be further behind.

Centre-back Bani Yaseen put his side in front in the 26th minute when he was given the time and space to head home Baha Abdelrahman's corner unchallenged, powering the ball beyond the flat-footed goalkeeper Mat Ryan.

"We knew where their dangers were going to come from and, on a set piece, we can't be conceding those goals," Milligan added.

"We know we need to be better, but there's still good signs, we know we have to execute better."

"I'm lucky I've got a great bunch of boys, this will hurt everyone, it's hurting me. We'll let Arnie have his say and get to work."

Four minutes later, Abdelrahman almost added a second when his

free kick from the edge of the area speared towards goal, only for Ryan to push the ball onto the woodwork before it was cleared.

For all their possession in the opposition half, Australia crafted few clear opportunities, with Awer Mabil's shot coming back off goalkeeper Amer Shafi's legs and Jamie MacLaren heading over the bar.

Mabil hit the woodwork late in the second half as Australia grew increasingly desperate to find an equaliser and Shafi was kept busy until the final kick of the game as Jordan held on for a famous win over their more illustrious opponents.

Australia fans took to social media to blast Arnold and his team.

"So much wrong with that #Socceroos display. Lacking quality & composure, passion & desire. Huge amount of work to do," wrote one user. "Jordan implemented their game plan perfectly, we didn't even have one," said another.

The defeat leaves the Aussies with much to ponder ahead of Friday's game against Palestine, a must-win if they want to get their title defence back on track.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN

UAE not pressing panic button despite dismal draw

FOUR-DIGIT DRAW

Jan 06 2019

FIRST ♦ 0458
SECOND ♦ 7211
THIRD ♦ 8722

STARTERS

1980 2092 2661
2848 3955 6004
6015 6757 7327
9276

CONSOLATIONS

3245 3711 3735
4734 5166 5656
5673 6599 7489
7512

ABU DHABI • Eight years ago, Japan were held 1-1 by Jordan in their first group-stage game before going on to win the Asian Cup.

Italian Alberto Zaccheroni was the coach of the Blue Samurai then and he is optimistic history will repeat itself for 2019 host the United Arab Emirates.

It was a case of deja vu for the 65-year-old as his UAE side scored a late penalty to salvage a 1-1 draw with Middle East rivals Bahrain at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

Substitute Ahmed Khalil smashed home his spot kick after Mohamed Marhoon handled the ball inside the penalty area, cancelling out Mohamed Al Romaihi's 78th-minute opener for Bahrain in the Group A meeting.

The late goal spared the world

No. 79 the indignity of losing to a side 34 places below them in the Fifa rankings, but it would have done little to ease the pressure on Zaccheroni, who has come in for criticism throughout his time in charge of the UAE.

"When I was in charge of Japan, we ended with a draw in the first game of the 2011 Asian Cup against Jordan, then we won the tournament," said Zaccheroni. "The same scenario played out today, as we went behind."

"We had our chances but just couldn't take them. We struggled to supply the forwards at times and the players were getting a little frustrated. But we will have to deal with the pressure and be brave."

Without star playmaker Omar Abdulrahman, who was ruled out of the tournament with an anterior



The UAE's Ali Mabkhout (far left) challenging Bahrain's Kamail Al Aswad for the ball during the teams' 1-1 draw in the Asian Cup Group A match on Saturday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

cruciate ligament injury, the UAE lacked cohesion and composure in front of goal, with striker Ali Mabkhout missing several chances. The home side paid the price for their profligacy in the 78th minute when Al Romaihi bundled home after his initial header appeared to have crossed the line.

Jordanian referee Adham

Makhadmeh then gave the host a lifeline when he pointed to the spot five minutes from time for what appeared to be an unintentional handball by Marhoon.

Khalil, appearing in his 100th international, displayed nerves of steel to smash the spot kick into the top corner.

Bahrain coach Miroslav Soukup

refused to criticise the referee after the late setback.

"You could maybe say it was hard luck," said the Czech. "I didn't see it and I haven't seen the video, but the players were saying it wasn't a deliberate handball – so it's bad luck."

In another Group A match yesterday, Thailand lost 4-1 to India. REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

EMERY GUNNING FOR SIGNINGS

Arsenal boss eyes Barcelona's Denis Suarez even as youngsters shine in 3-0 FA Cup win

SHOPPING LIST

Maybe the transfer market can help us with a centre back, but it is not easy because also (Konstantinos) Mavropanos is coming back after injury. Also a winger, right or left, one player can help us in this position.



UNAI EMERY, Arsenal manager, is clear which positions he wants to reinforce.

LONDON • Unai Emery was pleased with the “progress and passion” of his young attackers after Arsenal’s 3-0 FA Cup third-round victory against Blackpool on Saturday, but he also made no secret of his intention to bring in reinforcements during January’s transfer window.

The Gunners cruised to victory with teenager Joe Willock scoring twice – becoming the youngest Arsenal player to score in an FA Cup tie since Aaron Ramsey in 2010 – before Alex Iwobi added gloss to the scoreline.

“I think the club is working on the possibility to take some players who can help us during these next four months,” said Emery.

“Maybe the transfer market can help us with a centre back, but it is not easy because also (Konstantinos) Mavropanos is coming back after injury. Also a winger, right or left, one player can help us in this position.”

Arsenal are reportedly in negotiations with Barcelona over the signing of 24-year-old midfielder Denis Suarez who played for Emery at

Sevilla during the 2014-15 season.

Suarez, who spent two years at Manchester City as an academy player between 2011 and 2013, has played 46 league matches for Barcelona in 2½ seasons but has never been able to hold down a regular starting place.

The Spaniard, who has one international cap, won in 2016, is under contract with Barcelona until 2020 and would cost around £20 million (\$34.6 million).

Asked whether he saw Suarez as a winger, Emery added: “He was playing in his career, and with me also, as a right or left winger.”

Emery retained only four players in the starting line-up from the 4-1 Premier League victory over Fulham on New Year’s Day, and it was the young attackers who shone, with Willock ably supported by fellow 19-year-olds Eddie Nketiah and Ainsley Maitland-Niles.

Emery said: “We need players with commitment. We need players who are prepared when the team needs them and can step up. We mixed experienced players in the squad with some young players like Joe, Eddie and Ainsley.

“It was a good combination. They showed us they are progressing with the team and, mostly impor-



tantly, they showed their passion.”

Willock’s day could have been even better but a linesman’s flag ruled out a hat-trick goal.

“The linesman crushed my dreams with the hat-trick, but that’s football and, hopefully, I can get another opportunity soon. Hopefully, the boss keeps believing in me,” said the midfielder.

Arsenal’s team bus was briefly delayed on their way to the match after a Blackpool fan climbed onto its roof in protest at the Lancashire seaside club’s owners.

The fan was photographed sitting on top of the coach at Arsenal’s team hotel shortly before the London side were to depart for the match at Bloomfield Road.

Supporters of third-tier Blackpool have regularly protested against club owner Owen Oyston and many are boycotting home games with gates averaging only 4,129 at their 17,000-seater ground which hosted Premier League football in 2010-11.

The man was eventually arrested and the Arsenal team arrived in good time for kick-off.

Asked if the incident had affected their preparations, Emery said: “There was no change for us. We prepared as usual and I am proud of our work today.

“We had big commitment, good concentration, we were competitive and we imposed our quality little by little.” THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS

Joe Willock scoring Arsenal’s and his second goal in the 3-0 FA Cup win over Blackpool on Saturday. The 19-year-old midfielder became the youngest Arsenal player to score in an FA Cup tie since Aaron Ramsey in 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

City in seventh heaven with Rotherham mauling



Midfielder Phil Foden scoring Manchester City’s second goal against Rotherham during their 7-0 win in the third round of the FA Cup yesterday. A heavy first touch on the 18-year-old’s right foot saw the ball ricochet off his left foot past goalkeeper Marek Rodak to double City’s lead after Raheem Sterling had opened the scoring. An own goal by Semi Ajayi, and strikes from Gabriel Jesus, Riyad Mahrez, Nicolas Otamendi and Leroy Sane gave the English champions their biggest win under Pep Guardiola as they made light work of their Championship opponents at the Etihad Stadium. In other games featuring Premier League sides, struggling Fulham were knocked out by fourth-tier Oldham after a 2-1 defeat, while Watford beat Woking 2-0 to end the run of the non-league side who had television commentator Martin Tyler on their bench in his unpaid role as assistant manager. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hazard leads tributes for departing Fabregas

LONDON • Chelsea forward Eden Hazard has paid tribute to Cesc Fabregas, saying that he was “lucky” to have played with the Spaniard ahead of the midfielder’s move to French Ligue 1 side Monaco.

Fabregas shared an emotional moment with the Stamford Bridge faithful after Saturday’s 2-0 FA Cup third-round win over Nottingham Forest, applauding all sides of the crowd while he was also in tears.

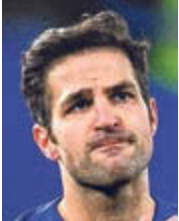
The 31-year-old, who joined Chelsea in 2014, will reunite with former Arsenal teammate Thierry Henry, who is now the Monaco coach.

“In five years, I can say that I was lucky to play with him,” Hazard said.

“Since the beginning when he came, we saw with the first year we won the double together.

4

Major trophies Cesc Fabregas won as a Chelsea player.



ard arrived from Lille. The duo have won two Premier League titles, one League Cup and one FA Cup during their time together.

Chelsea assistant coach Carlo Cudicini also hailed Fabregas as “one of a kind”.

“What can I say about Cesc? He is a player who is unique, he has an unbelievable awareness and vision of where his teammates are on the pitch,” the former goalkeeper said.

“I think he is one of the few who have the ability to give balls behind the defensive line that are so precise.

“He is a one-of-a-kind player. He has been fantastic for the teams he played for before us and the contribution he has given this club and to this team has been amazing. Cesc is a top, top player.”

Cudicini added that Alvaro

Morata’s two goals in the win over Nottingham Forest would “free his mind” after a lean spell for the Spanish striker.

Morata struck twice in the second half, his first goals in domestic competition for two months.

“It was very important for him to score two goals which can only be good for his confidence. Hopefully, it will be good for his morale that he scored and, hopefully, he will be more free in his mind,” Cudicini said.

“For a striker, it’s difficult when you go through a spell when you don’t score many goals, so his body language was a bit down but, in training, he’s working very hard.

“We all knew that sooner or later, he would be able to turn the corner and start scoring goals.”

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Mon, 7 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	China PR	Kyrgyzstan	7.00pm	LW
Asian Cup	Korea Republic	Philippines	9.30pm	LW*
Tue, 8 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	Iran	Yemen	12.00am	LW*
English Cup	Wolverhampton	Liverpool	3.45am	LW*
Spanish League	Celta de Vigo	Athletic Bilbao	4.00am	LW*
LW* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.				
LOTTERY				
TOTO Mon, 7 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3438/2019				
Group 1 Prize \$1,000,000 est.				
Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994				
No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above) Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast) SB: Sportsbuzz@Crang (21 years and above) Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6786 6666 for more details.				
PLAY RESPONSIBLY			SINGAPORE POOLS	
Stay Sober. National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1800-6-888-688			RCB Reg No: 196002020	



Trevor Tan en route to winning the Junior B Men's 1,000m at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy yesterday. Besides looking to qualify for the 2022 Winter Olympics, Trevor has also set his sights on doing well at the SEA Games in the Philippines at the end of the year, and the 2020 Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne, Switzerland.
ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

PRAISEWORTHY MOVE

Making the decision to put studies on hold to pursue one's sporting dreams is never easy and we are proud of Trevor for boldly chasing his dream.

TAN TECK HOCK, principal of Singapore Sports School, praising Trevor Tan for his courage to go to South Korea to train.

SKATER TAN PUTS STUDIES ON ICE

Sports School student to spend a year in South Korea to pursue his Olympic dreams

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Few 16-year-olds have the courage to leave their family and friends and go to a foreign country some 4,700km away to train for a year and pursue their sporting dreams.

Not speed skater Trevor Tan, who is prepared to go the distance to fulfil his full potential as an athlete.

In a bid to qualify for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the Singapore Sports School (SSP) student will put his studies on hold for a year.

He leaves tonight to spend a year training at the Goyang Club in Gyeonggi, South Korea.

While he has trained at the Goyang Club four times on shorter stints since mid-2017, Trevor is fully aware this one-year stint away from his loved ones will be his toughest challenge yet.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity of travelling to South Korea on my own as this will help me become a more independent individual," he told The Straits Times yesterday, after winning the men's Junior B (15-16 years old) 1,000m

race at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy at The Rink @ JCube.

"I anticipate that the journey ahead will be long and tough, but I am excited because I know that these experiences will only make me a better skater."

At the Goyang Club, Trevor will train alongside top Korean speed skaters such as 2014 and 2018 Winter Olympics champion Kim A-lang, and 2010 Winter Olympics silver medallist Kwak Yoon-gy.

In making the bold move, the teenager follows in the footsteps of national speed skater Lucas Ng, who had moved to Goyang at the end of 2016 to train full-time, but is now back in Singapore.

Besides qualifying for the 2022 Winter Olympics, Trevor has set his

sights on doing well at the SEA Games in the Philippines at the end of the year, and the 2020 Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne, Switzerland.

He will also compete at the World Junior Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Seoul from Jan 25 to 27.

At the end of his overseas stint, Trevor will return to the SSP next year to resume his studies in Year Five of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

Trevor was one of the first two winter sports athletes to join the SSP, along with figure skater Pagiel Sng in 2017. Two speed skaters, Amelia Chua Rae-Lene and Ryo Ong Yik, enrolled as Secondary 1 students this year.

SSP principal Tan Teck Hock praised Trevor for his move.

"Making the decision to put studies on hold to pursue one's sporting dreams is never easy and we are proud of Trevor for boldly chasing his dream," he said.

"Singapore Sports School is committed to supporting our student-athletes in their journey towards sports excellence, while obtaining an education.

"Several student-athletes have been granted Leave of Absence while they were at Sports School and we will continue to help those who are pushing for that quantum leap in their development.

"I trust that this year-long training and competition stint will be invaluable to Trevor's development

and I wish him the very best."

In other races at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy yesterday, Singapore's first Winter Olympian Cheyenne Goh clinched the women's 1,000m race to add to the 1,500m and 500m golds she had won on Saturday.

Goh won in a time of 2min 25.35sec, ahead of Filipino duo Kathryn Magno (2:25.976) and Anna Cruz (2:49.932).

Lucas Ng, who had won the men's 500m race and claimed a silver in the 1,500m on Saturday, added another silver in the 1,000m (1:48.759), behind Australian Luke Cullen (1:48.178). Filipino Lyle Cadiz (1:55.288) finished third.

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Gary Woodland nailed a spectacular eagle on the 15th hole and added a birdie on 18th at the Kapalua Plantation Course to restore a three-shot lead over Rory McIlroy at the Tournament of Champions in Hawaii on Saturday.
PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Grief of losing grandmother galvanises Woodland

LOS ANGELES • Gary Woodland had to keep his emotions in check after he followed up a spectacular eagle on the 15th hole with a birdie at the last to restore his three-shot lead over Rory McIlroy at the Tournament of Champions in Hawaii on Saturday.

The American, who carded a five-under 68 and moved to 17-under 202 after three rounds, had learnt of the death of his grandmother just the night before.

"I want to send a little shout out

to my family back home," he said.

"We lost my grandma last night. It was a tough night last night but today was a good day. I played great.

"I would have liked to see a couple of putts go in early. It was nice to see that long one go in on the par five there on the back – nice to finish with a birdie here on 18."

The 34-year-old provided the shot of the day on the par-five 15th when he converted a curving 64-foot putt off the flag stick for an eagle and the outright lead, mo-

ments after McIlroy (68) had grabbed a share of the lead with a birdie on 14. Woodland said he did not realise that the Northern Irishman had pulled into a tie for the lead on the back nine.

"I was just trying to stay within myself," he said. "Trying to stay aggressive."

McIlroy, on 14-under 205, was alone in second, a shot ahead of Australian Marc Leishman (68) on a breezy day at the scenic Kapalua Plantation Course in Maui.

Woodland, who has won three times in 231 starts on the PGA Tour, said it was important to learn how to turn promising positions into victories.

"I've been in this position before but I'm a completely different kind of player now. I'll use all those experiences to my advantage and take what I can from them," he said, ahead of yesterday's final round.

"I'll go out and play aggressive tomorrow and make a lot of birdies."

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Reds can deal with defeat well: Klopp

LONDON • Jurgen Klopp is not concerned that Liverpool's dressing room morale might fall apart as a result of the narrow Premier League defeat at Manchester City last week.

The Reds manager intends to make a number of changes for today's FA Cup third-round tie at Wolverhampton Wanderers, but is confident that it will be business as usual in the league after that.

"All the boys in the squad are pretty experienced at dealing with defeat," the German said.

"We've had a few of them before. This was just our first in the league and we actually played quite well at the Etihad. I don't think we need to feel insecure about losing 2-1.

"We gave City a good game and it was a very tight game. We were unlucky at times, but that's absolutely okay because when City came to Anfield, they missed a late penalty. That could have been a defeat for us right back in October, but it wasn't."

Klopp felt that, by some measures, Liverpool did better against City in defeat than they did on the occasions last season when they won.

"There is nothing wrong with going down narrowly at the Etihad," he said.

"I regard that as the most difficult place in England to go and get a result and this time the margins were so fine that I would say the

game was shared roughly 50-50.

"In the past, even when we have won, it's been more like 60-40 in City's favour. Even when we beat them 3-0 in the Champions League last season, City still had a lot of the game; we were under pressure for long periods and the reason we won was that we were quite clinical in taking our chances.

"The last game was different from all the others we have played against City; there were two teams matching each other and I think that shows how much we have improved."

Liverpool are away to Brighton next in the Premier League on Saturday but, before that, there is the match against Wolves and a welcome respite from the intensity of the league programme over the holiday period.

Simon Mignolet will get a game in goal and there will most likely be starts for Naby Keita and Adam Lallana. Klopp also confirmed a start for Alberto Moreno, the left-back who went public at the end of last year with his dissatisfaction over a lack of game time.

"The FA Cup is a very important competition, but we have to make sure we can play with the right intensity," the manager added.

THE GUARDIAN

WOLVES V LIVERPOOL
Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am

RISK WORTH TAKING FOR SLINGERS

Delvin Goh plays on despite foul trouble and makes major contribution against Dreamers

David Lee

He was called for a fourth personal foul right at the end of the third period in yesterday's Asean Basketball League (ABL) match against the Formosa Dreamers, putting Singapore Slingers power forward Delvin Goh just one offence away from fouling out.

Some coaches might have opted to take him off and save him for the final minutes of the last quarter, but Slingers coach Neo Beng Siang took a bold decision and kept the 23-year-old on the court at the Changhua County Stadium in Taiwan.

The gamble proved a masterstroke as Goh contributed three points from a lay-up and a free throw, as well as one steal and one offensive rebound in four minutes before he committed his fifth foul on Malcolm Miller.

By then, the damage was already done as the Slingers opened the final quarter with a 9-0 run to extend their lead to 15 points, and they eventually won 88-80 to end their two-game losing skid.

Neo said: "We needed Delvin's rebounds at both ends and he did a good job, so it (keeping him on court) was worth it."

"I'm happy and proud everyone played good defence and stayed disciplined against a good team and a tough away crowd."

While the Slingers (6-3) remain fourth in the 10-team ABL, they inflicted a first home loss on third-placed Dreamers and exacted some form of revenge for the 77-73 reverse at the OCBC Arena in November.

It was not just Neo and Goh who displayed courage and decisiveness.

Dreamers' American centre Will Artino landed heavily on his ankle after making a basket in the third quarter and had to receive treatment in the locker room, but showed great resilience to return to

the court after just two minutes.

Slingers' shooting guard Ng Hanbin was not so fortunate after being knocked in the knee by Kenneth Chien in the same period. Up to that point, Ng was the best shooter in the arena as he converted five of seven field-goal attempts, including four successful three-pointers.

Neo said: "He has not scored as much as we would have liked in previous games, and it could be a confidence issue."

"But we continue to give him the green light to shoot, and he delivered today. We hope he is okay and will return soon to help us."

Basketball is often described as a game of runs, and the Dreamers almost mounted a comeback in the final quarter when they produced their own 11-0 run to reduce the Slingers' lead to just four points.

But Slingers forward Jerran Young then took over with two fearless drives to the basket to ensure there was to be no late collapse.

The 27-year-old American starred with 27 points – making all 11 of his free throws – 11 rebounds, eight assists, four steals and three blocks.

This win is a morale-booster for the Slingers as they tackle four games in eight days.

They play Hong Kong Eastern and Zhuhai Wolf Warriors on Wednesday and Friday respectively, before facing Mono Vampire at home on Sunday.

Neo said: "We gave them a few days off in the festive season and we have confidence in our pre-season work and we will be making sure the players have the best recovery they can have in between games."

In other matches yesterday, Hong Kong Eastern beat Westports Malaysia Dragons 89-78, Saigon Heat defeated Mono Vampire 101-82, and defending champions Alab Pilipinas stayed top by beating Zhuhai Wolf Warriors 105-95.

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Delvin Goh scoring a basket in an earlier game. In yesterday's encounter against the Formosa Dreamers, Goh's efforts despite foul trouble helped the Slingers eventually win 88-80 to end a two-game losing run. ST PHOTO: JEREMY KWAN



ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

We needed Delvin's rebounds at both ends and he did a good job, so it (keeping him on court) was worth it.



NEO BENG SIANG, Slingers coach, on his decision not to take Delvin Goh out of the game despite the power forward being one foul away from getting ejected.

Warriors, Kings set record for combined three-pointers

SACRAMENTO (California) • Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr believes that shooting from distance has become the new norm in the National Basketball Association.

On Saturday night at the Golden 1 Centre, Stephen Curry connected on 10 three-pointers as part of a 42-point performance, helping the Warriors outlast the Sacramento Kings 127-123 in a game that featured the most combined three-pointers in NBA history.

Golden State went 21-for-47 from downtown while the Kings made a franchise-record 20 in 36 attempts.

The 41 three-pointers were one more than the previous record of 40 set in a game last season between the Minnesota Timberwolves (19) and the Cleveland Cavaliers (21).

"It's right there for you to see, right?" Kerr said on ESPN of both teams' offensive prowess.

"Everybody's shooting threes. That was just an incredible offensive display by both teams."

"The problem for us tonight was the turnovers. Every time we turned the ball over, it was a three or dunk. That's what kept them in the game. I thought offensively we

got anything we wanted, but they got 29 points off our turnovers, a lot of those were threes."

Curry scored 20 of his 42 points in the fourth quarter, none bigger than a three-point play off a Draymond Green assist that put Golden State ahead for good at 123-121 with 2min 3sec to go.

"It's a fun way to play, especially when you're shooting a high percentage. You can shoot as many threes as you want to, but shooting a high percentage the way it was tonight on both ends was pretty crazy," Curry said.

41

Three-pointers Golden State and Sacramento made – an NBA record.

The Warriors (26-14) won their third straight on the road, successfully rebounding from an overtime loss at home to Houston two nights earlier.

Kevin Durant backed Curry with 29 points and nine assists, while Klay Thompson added 20 points. Green chipped in 12 points, seven rebounds and seven assists while Cook had 10 points.

Golden State shot 50.5 per cent for the game and won at Sacramento for the fourth straight time.

Buddy Hield buried a career-high eight three-pointers in 13 attempts

to account for most of his scoring on a 32-point night for the Kings, who have lost three straight to Golden State this season by one, five and four points.

Justin Jackson also established a career high for three-pointers with five during his 28-point game for Sacramento (19-20), who lost their fourth in a row.

Bogdan Bogdanovic had 17 points, Willie Cauley-Stein 14 to complement a game-high 13 rebounds, and Nemanja Bjelica 12 points for the Kings, who shot 47.4 per cent overall. REUTERS

Federer 'okay' with new rules at Australian Open

PERTH • Roger Federer and Angelique Kerber have cautiously welcomed new tie-break rules for the deciding set at the Australian Open.

The year's opening Grand Slam, starting on Jan 14, will for the first time feature an extended tie-break in the final set when the score reaches 6-6, rather than a traditional full set.

To win the decisive tie-break, a player will need to be the first to 10 with an advantage of at least two points.

The move means all four Grand Slams now use different rules, with only the French Open holding off from introducing a tie-break in the decider.

Speaking after he won a record third Hopman Cup in Perth on Saturday, Federer admitted marathon final sets would be missed by some.

"We will miss the 70-68 in the fifth, so that's a pity," he said, referring to the famous final-set marathon between John Isner and Nicolas Mahut at Wimbledon in 2010.

But the Swiss, who is now aiming for his third successive Australian Open title and seventh overall, said he was personally "a bit torn" between the options.

"I am okay with any format really," he said. "Things, when it goes to six-all in the fifth, you've had plenty of chances to win it, or lose

it, so from that standpoint how it ends is secondary in my opinion."

Kerber suggested her advantage could be diluted by shortened deciders in Melbourne, where she won her first Slam in 2016.

"I like physical matches and, if you come here to Australia, you have to be really fit," she said.

"With the weather, the conditions, it's really hot and humid and you have to be ready for that."

"I have no idea if I like (the new rule) or not. It might be easier because you can save energy, on the other side it is a tradition to play the advantage set. Let's see how it works this year."

Among the other Slams, Wimble-

don will use final-set tie-breaks at 12-12 starting this year, the US Open plays a traditional tie-break at 6-6 and the French Open does not use a final-set tie-break.

"The funny thing is we have four different formats in four Slams, so it is important to remind yourself what's going on and which one it is," added Federer.

Meanwhile, Karolina Pliskova won her second Brisbane International crown yesterday after beating Lesia Tsurenko 4-6, 7-5, 6-2.

In the men's final, Japan's Kei Nishikori claimed his first title since 2016 when he downed Russia's Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 3-6, 6-2. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Switzerland's Roger Federer and mixed doubles partner Belinda Bencic after winning the Hopman Cup in Perth on Saturday. With tie-break rules in place, marathon final sets will be missed, says Federer. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

SPORT



Amita Berthier in action against Huo Xingxin of China in the Asian Games last August. Her latest feat in Italy comes after winning gold in Guatemala in November and a silver in Cuba last month. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

AMITA CHEERED BY HER CONSISTENCY

Fencer wins bronze at Junior World Cup Italy leg, targets a top-64 finish at senior event

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Singapore fencer Amita Berthier carried her good form from 2018 into the new year, clinching a bronze medal in the Udine leg of the International Fencing Federation's (FIE) Junior World Cup in Italy yesterday.

It was the third consecutive podium finish for the 18-year-old at

a Junior World Cup leg, after winning gold in Guatemala in November and a silver in Cuba last month. "I've been more consistent compared with maybe two or three years ago," Berthier, who lost 15-10 to eventual winner Serena Rossini of Italy in the semi-finals, told The Straits Times in a phone interview. "For me, that's very good, because any good result shows that my hard work is paying off."

"This competition is significant for me because, down here, we had the top countries like Italy, France, Germany and Russia, and so to make a top-three finish is another milestone for my career." Berthier did not have an easy ride to winning her bronze medal. She had to get past home favourite Martina Favaretto in the round of 32, after the Italian surprisingly lost two of her six poule matches. Berthier, ranked No. 2 in the junior world rankings, saw off the 17-year-old world No. 3 15-13. In the quarter-finals, she faced Hungary's Nora Hajas, who had

beaten her in the semi-finals of the women's foil event at the World Junior and Cadet Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria two years ago. The Singaporean, who studies at the University of Notre Dame, showed how much she has improved since their previous meeting by beating the 18-year-old 15-8. Berthier will next turn her attention to the Senior World Cup in Poland this weekend. She will spend two days visiting her grandparents in Lyon, France, before heading to Katowice, hoping to improve on her performance last year when she ranked 100th

out of 184 fencers. This time, she is hoping to secure at least a top-64 finish. "My target is to qualify for the second day (the final 64) of the competition, fence against whoever is in my way, and try to beat them," she said. Another Singaporean fencer, Denyse Chan, also did well with a top-16 placing in Italy over the weekend. The 15-year-old beat Italians Margherita Lorenzi (15-9) and Martina Manzoli (15-9) in the round of 64 and round of 32 respectively, before losing to Berthier 15-6 in the last 16. "I came into this competition simply hoping for the best, so I never expected such a result," said the Raffles Girls' School student, who achieved a top-64 finish in her previous World Cup outing in London in November. "It was extremely surreal and it showed me that all my efforts from 2018 did not go to waste. "It was an exhilarating experience and certainly a great start to the year."

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India on the cusp of historic triumph

SYDNEY • Australia were forced to follow-on on home soil for the first time in 30 years after being dismissed for 300 as India went for the jugular in search of a maiden series triumph on the fourth day of the final Test yesterday. Openers Usman Khawaja (4) and Marcus Harris (2) safely negotiated four overs until bad light and light drizzle forced an early end to an already heavily rain-disrupted day just before the rescheduled tea break. Australia will resume on six without loss today, still without a century in the series and 316 runs adrift of India's mammoth first innings effort of 622-7 declared. The tourists, leading 2-1 in the four-test series, need only a draw to secure a breakthrough triumph in Australia, but skipper Virat Kohli did not hesitate to send the hosts back in when they fell well short of the 423 runs needed to avoid the follow-on. "Yesterday, when they were about 150 for five, we looked at the weather forecast and decided we

would definitely enforce the follow-on if we could get them out," India bowling coach Bharat Arun told reporters. "It's a great opportunity for us to make it 3-1 and that's a big motivation for us." Play at the Sydney Cricket Ground finally got under way after a rain delay of almost four hours with the hosts resuming on 236-6, and India needed just 80 minutes to take the remaining Australian wickets at a cost of 64 runs. Mohammed Shami set India on their way when he took the second new ball immediately and removed Pat Cummins' off stump with the sixth delivery of the day to dismiss his fellow pacesman for 25. Peter Handscomb, recalled for his ability to play spin, followed for 37 after adding nine runs to his overnight tally, dragging the ball onto his stumps to give quick Jasprit Bumrah his first wicket of the match. Nathan Lyon faced just five balls before he was adjudged leg before wicket to fellow spinner Kuldeep



India captain Virat Kohli celebrating after Australia batsman Pat Cummins was clean bowled by Mohammed Shami on the fourth day of the fourth and final cricket Test between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground. PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Yadav for a duck, a decision Australia opted against reviewing despite a question mark over whether the ball would have hit the stumps. Josh Hazlewood was dropped by Hanuma Vihari off Kuldeep's bowling when he had yet to score and he and fellow tail-ender Mitchell Starc (29 not out) fought a dogged rear-guard to put on 42 for the final wicket. Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep (5-99) finally got his man to secure a second five-wicket haul in his

sixth test, though, trapping Hazlewood leg before wicket for 21, in a decision confirmed after a review. England were the last team to force Australia to follow-on at home in the drawn 1988 Sydney test, a result the hosts are unlikely to repeat unless the weather intervenes decisively. "It hurts, you never want to follow-on in any cricket match," Handscomb said. "Huge for us to push for the draw tomorrow, we've obviously got a re-

ally good chance to shift some momentum back into our camp – not just for the one-dayers coming up but for the World Cup and the Ashes (against England). "This movement can really start tomorrow... If we can last this day and show the country, show the world, that we're not far from being a really good team." REUTERS

AUSTRALIA V INDIA

Day 5: Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30am

SportsWorld

Paddlers get bigger purse at Nationals

The prize money for the National Table Tennis Grand Finale has increased to \$13,800 from last year's \$8,800. The competition, held at the Singapore Table Tennis Association's Lee Kong Chian Training Hall at Toa Payoh Lorong 6, began on Friday and ends on Sunday. Admission is free. In yesterday's team finals, Sunsports Team 6 won the men's event while the SSP Red took top honours in the women's event.

In-form Bautista Agut wins first Qatar Open

DOHA • Roberto Bautista Agut followed up his shock semi-final victory over world No. 1 tennis player Novak Djokovic by lifting the Qatar Open title on Saturday. The Spaniard, ranked 24th in the world, ground out a hard-fought victory in three sets against the Czech Republic's Tomas Berdych, winning 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 in the final. It was the 30-year-old's ninth career title and his first in Doha. He also beat three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka in straight sets earlier in the week. In total, Bautista Agut lost only two sets all week in his five matches. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Georges rallies to retain Auckland title

AUCKLAND • Julia Georges drew on her experience to retain the WTA Auckland Classic title yesterday as she came from a set down to end the stunning run of Canadian teen sensation Bianca Andreescu. There were tears from the 30-year-old German in an emotional celebration after winning the match 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 with the final point coming when an Andreescu forehand went into the net. The 18-year-old Andreescu beat three top 50 players, including former world No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki and Venus Williams, on her way to her first WTA final. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

CRICKET

4th & final Test Australia v India: Day 5 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30am).

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group C: China v Kyrgyzstan (6.50pm), South Korea v Philippines (9.20pm). Group D: Iran v Yemen (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208. English FA Cup 3rd rd: Wolves v Liverpool (Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am). Spanish LaLiga Celta v Bilbao (StarHub Ch213, tomorrow, 3.55am).

TENNIS

World Tennis Challenge Day 1 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 4pm).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group D: Iraq v Vietnam (9.20pm). Group E: Saudi Arabia v North Korea (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208. League Cup S-finals, 1st leg: Tottenham v Chelsea (StarHub Ch202 & Singtel TV Ch111, Wednesday, 3.55am).

TENNIS

World Tennis Challenge Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 4pm).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **WANG LEEHOM CONCERT**
Outer space theme alienates the audience
D6



We must be willing to let go of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

— Joseph Campbell

Live more. Bant less.



According to a study by the Singapore Eye Research Institute, childhood myopia is largely attributed to frequent near-work activities done with handheld devices such as iPads. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Protect your child's vision

A Myopia Centre will open in Bedok in about two months to help tackle the high myopia rate among children in Singapore



Joyce Teo

For people who are shortsighted, blurry vision is the norm the minute they remove their glasses or contact lenses.

And their eyesight could worsen over time, possibly leading to an increased risk of eye diseases.

Myopia is a serious problem in Singapore. The prevalence of childhood myopia among seven- to nine-year-olds here is one of the highest in the world, said Associate Professor Lee Shu Yen, senior consultant and deputy head of the surgical retina department at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC).

This is why, in about two months, the SNEC is opening its first Myopia Centre, which will offer eye screenings and specialist consultations, and conduct clinical and product trials. It will be located at the former Bedok polyclinic.

The high childhood myopia rate in Singapore is largely attributed to frequent near-work activities done with handheld gaming devices, personal computers, mobile phones and iPads, according to a study by the Singapore Eye Research Institute, Prof Lee said.

It is not because children in Singapore read a lot in dim lighting or sit

too close to the TV while watching programmes.

"In fact, a higher exposure to near work is the main contributing factor – besides heredity and genetic factors – to increased risks of myopia... among children in Singapore," said Prof Lee, who is also president of the Singapore Society of Ophthalmology.

"For kids, particularly those whose parents have myopia, limiting the amount of near work with handheld devices and encouraging more outdoor activities can help reduce risks of eye diseases."

A 2015 World Health Organisation report on myopia pointed out that when children spent more than two hours a day outdoors, their risk of myopia was reduced, even when they had two myopic parents and continued to perform near work.

Myopia level tends to rise rapidly for children between the ages of five and 15 years, and usually stabilises by their early 20s.

The earlier myopia develops, the higher the likelihood of one developing high myopia later in life.

"Many people don't realise that high myopia leads to many eye

For kids, particularly those whose parents have myopia, limiting the amount of near work with handheld devices and encouraging more outdoor activities can help reduce risks of eye diseases.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LEE SHU YEN, senior consultant and deputy head of the surgical retina department at the Singapore National Eye Centre

problems later in adulthood including cataract, glaucoma, retinal tears and macular degeneration," said Dr Claudine Pang, an ophthalmologist at Asia Retina Eye Surgery Centre.

"In fact, I am seeing these diseases appearing at an earlier age among my patients."

She added: "We should focus on myopia prevention in our children to prevent the occurrence of such eye diseases in the future."

As for those who are aged 50 and older, annual eye examinations are important, particularly if they are in a high-risk group with a history of diabetes or a family history of glaucoma or macular degeneration, said Prof Lee.

"Even if you do not notice a change in your vision, you should have an eye exam at least once every five years," she said.

"After age 65, you should have your eyes checked every one to two years, as your risk for developing eye disease increases with age."

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[MORE on D2](#)

FROM D1

Clear facts on eye care

Myopia is not caused by reading in dim lighting. Neither is it caused by watching too much TV. Eye doctors debunk these myths and more on myopia and eye care.

Myth: Myopia is not serious, so I do not have to worry about preventing or controlling it.

Fact: Most people who have myopia do not have serious eye issues. They just need eyeglasses or contact lenses to sharpen their vision.

However, one's myopia level can progress.

Myopia is the most common eye health issue among children. As their myopia level progresses, they run a risk of developing high myopia, said Associate Professor Lee Shu Yen, president of the Singapore Society of Ophthalmology.

It is a condition that can lead to increased risks of complications such as retinal tears and detachment, and glaucoma, she said.

Myth: Watching TV while seated very close to it will harm the eyes.

Fact: In the early days when TV sets emitted low levels of radiation, too much exposure to that could increase the risk of eye problems in some people, said Prof Lee.

However, this issue has long been eradicated.

Myth: Reading in poor light will lead to myopia or worsen one's vision.

Fact: Dim lighting will not affect eyesight, but it does tire out one's eyes more quickly as they have to "work harder" to focus and see more clearly.

"There may also be a compromise in the contrast sensitivity, so things may not appear as clear – for example, the number 6 may be confused with 5 or 8," Prof Lee said.

"Eye strain per se will not cause a progression of myopia. Instead, it causes fatigue, tiredness and may also result in headaches."

In children, it is not the exposure to darkness or dim lighting that results in the progression of myopia, but rather, the near work associated with reading or using handheld devices, she added.

Myth: Digital devices are a must in this modern age and there is no need to limit their use just to protect children's eyes.

Fact: Over-straining the eyes with excessive near work, especially the use of digital devices, will worsen myopia in children, whose eyes are still immature and developing, said Dr Claudine Pang, an ophthalmologist at Asia Retina Eye Surgery Centre.

Children should adopt good near-work habits, including having limited digital device use and engaging in more outdoor play to prevent myopia progression, she said.

Dr Marc Tay, a senior consultant at LSC Eye Clinic, suggested that children break up their reading or computer time.

Myth: Long hours of staring at the computer at work will worsen one's myopia.

Fact: Increased near-work hours will not impact the prevalence of refractive errors – myopia, hyperopia (or long-sightedness) or astigmatism – among adults, said Prof Lee.

However, it will worsen the symptoms of eye strain, fatigue and secondary dry eyes.

"What we've seen is that some patients feel exceptionally tired after work hours; some may even experience headaches and nausea," she said.

"Taking breaks from the screen and using lubricants to refresh the eyes are some tips for working adults."

Myth: Reading lights should always be placed behind us, so that we can see everything clearly.

Fact: The best way to position a reading light is to have it shine directly onto the page and not over your shoulder, said Prof Lee.

"A light that shines over the shoulder will cause a glare, making it more difficult for you to see the reading material."

Myth: People should take care of their eyes by using eco-friendly LED reading lamps.

Fact: There is no proof that LED lamps can help with eye health, though they could, perhaps, help to make it more comfortable for you to read, said Dr Tay.

Dr Pang said LED lights emit light in the longer wavelength spectrum which causes less glare, gives more comfort and makes images appear clearer.

However, some studies have



ST ILLUSTRATION:
SALLY LAM

shown that over-exposure to blue light emitted from LED lamps can actually harm one's eyes by causing damage to the retina and negatively impacting normal sleep patterns.

While it is generally safe to use LED light to illuminate a room, avoid looking directly into the light for prolonged periods and avoid over-exposure to powerful LED light sources, she advised.

"Using blue-light filters for LED digital devices may be one way to cut down blue-light exposure to our eyes," said Dr Pang.

"Another way to optimise both our eye health and sleep health would be to cut down usage of digital devices in general and to avoid using them in the hour before bedtime."

Myth: Going for a lower prescription is better for one's eyes as it will not tire the eyes so much.

Fact: Wearing glasses of the wrong prescription will lead to over-straining of the eye muscles and

worsen myopia in children, Dr Pang said.

One's eyes continually strive to achieve a clear sharp image for the brain. If the eyes are subjected to a blurred image for a long duration – either due to wrong prescription or under-correction – the eye muscles will continuously over-strain to try to focus clearly. This may lead to myopia progression and may even result in amblyopia or "lazy" eyes in children, she said.

Hence, it is advisable for children to wear glasses with the correct prescription at all times.

Myth: Eating carrots will improve one's eyesight.

Fact: Carrots contain Vitamin A, which also comes from other food sources. Dr Tay recommends a well-balanced, healthy diet to keep your eyes healthy.

Dr Pang said that antioxidants (Vitamin A, C and E), which can be found in fruit and vegetables, are helpful in preventing many eye dis-

eases such as cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration.

"Foods rich in lutein and zeaxanthin (retinal pigments), such as dark green leafy vegetables, are good for our retinal health," she said.

"Our retina houses all our photoreceptors which are mainly responsible for our vision, so taking care of our retinal health is important."

Lutein and other antioxidants (Vitamin C and E) have been proven to be useful in slowing down macular degeneration, she added. And omega-3 supplements have been shown to help protect the eyes from macular degeneration as well as improve tear production to prevent dry eyes.

Omega-3 also has many health benefits such as preventing blood vessel clots and eye strokes, she added. Eye strokes happen when blockages occur in arteries or veins in the retina, causing vision loss.

Joyce Teo

Forget the fat-burning zone, calories matter more

If you are the kind of exerciser who constantly checks your heart rate to ensure you are in the fat-burning zone, you should stop.

You will probably never meet your weight-loss goals that way. That is because there is no special fat-burning zone that is key to getting lean.

Yes, if you look at the wall charts or cardio equipment in a gym, or listen to many personal trainers, you will be indoctrinated about the "fat-burning zone".

The standard advice for getting in this zone is to work out at about 60 per cent of your maximum heart rate. That level of exertion is relatively low intensity; most people can talk in complete sentences while exercising at it. Working in this zone, it is said, will burn more fat and result in greater long-term weight loss, compared with doing the same exercise at higher intensities.

There is substance to part of this claim.

Your body primarily fuels itself by burning a mix of stored fat and carbohydrates. The less active you are at a given moment, the greater the percentage of that fuel mix comes from fat.

As your intensity of activity increases, the percentage of carbohydrates in that fuel mix also increases. At rest, fat constitutes as much as 85 per cent of calories burned. That figure shifts to about 70 per cent at an easy walking pace. If you transition to a moderate-effort run, the mix becomes about 50 per cent fat and 50 per cent car-

bohydrates, and it moves increasingly towards carbohydrates the faster you go.

So it is true that at some workout intensities, you are burning a higher percentage of fat than at other intensities.

But that does not mean this biological process is the key to losing weight from exercise. Experts explain that those who believe in a lard-melting zone simply are not seeing the forest – what it really takes to lose weight – for the fat-burning trees. They are forgetting about calories.

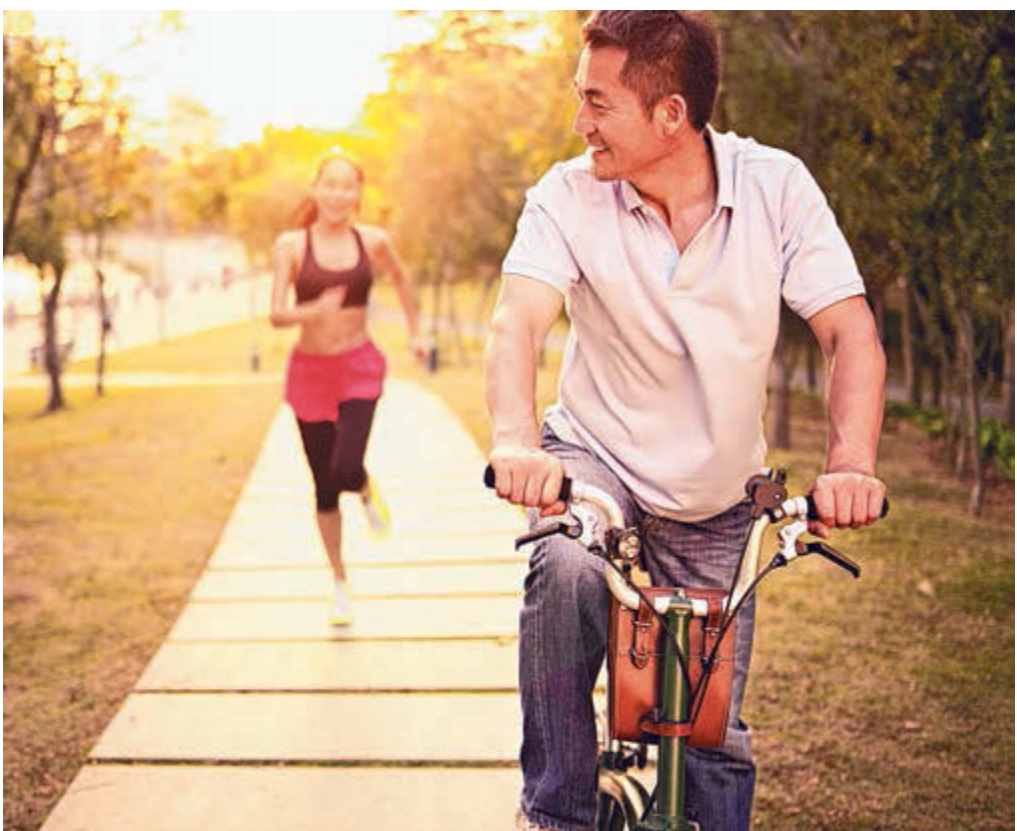
First, although it might sound better for weight loss to burn a higher percentage of fat, the real-world effect of that intensity on your body composition is next to nil.

"The idea that all of a sudden, when you hit this zone, the fat is just being sucked out of your system is simplistic," says Mr Christopher Breen, an exercise physiologist and online coach in Long Island. "That completely ignores that losing or maintaining weight is basically a matter of calories in versus calories out."

If the key determinant of weight loss was the percentage of fat you are burning, then your best bet would be to remain still, because that is when you are burning the highest percentage of fat relative to carbohydrates.

But, as Mr Breen says, total calories burned is what matters, and that fact leads to the second big problem with the fat-burning zone.

"If you're exercising at this lower intensity, you're burning fewer calo-



ries per minute," says Ms Christine Brooks, a University of Florida adjunct instructor and the coaching science coordinator for USA Track & Field. "The average person walking for an hour is going to burn only a couple hundred calories."

In that time, you could burn more than twice as many calories running, cycling or using an elliptical machine at a moderate intensity.

Be real: When you schedule a workout, you probably think in

terms of time, not number of calories burned. So, in the likely scenario that you have 30 or 45 minutes for exercise before or after work, you are just not going to burn that many calories if you spend that time in the would-be fat-burning zone.

"I'm all for people being more active, but most aren't going to regularly put in the time at a lower intensity to create a calorie deficit," Ms Brooks says.

Also, if you want to get all geeky, the maths argues against the fat-burning zone.

Walk 3.2km in an hour and you will burn about 200 calories, with roughly 140 of them fuelled by fat. Cycle moderately for that time and you will burn about 500 calories, with roughly 250 of them fuelled by fat – so you will burn more calories and more fat.

"When I worked with people in a gym, I would tell them, 'Ultimately,

it's a matter of calories; the fat burn will take care of itself,'" Mr Breen says.

"I have a real beef with the way this fat-burning idea is promoted," Ms Brooks says. "It's a very strange way to talk about exercise."

She and Mr Breen agree that the myth persists because it is an easy concept to grasp.

"It's a way of making exercise machines more appealing – if I'm working at this speed, I'll burn more fat than at another speed," Mr Breen says.

None of this is to suggest low-intensity exercise is a waste of time. Even the top athletes in the world regularly and purposefully work out at a light effort.

A gentle jog or easy spin is a great way to clear your head, get re-energised, improve your health, spend time with friends and family, and, yes, burn some calories.

"Mix it up," Mr Breen says about structuring your workouts. "Have some harder, high-intensity days, followed by easier, low-intensity recovery days."

Also aim for different durations. When you have the time, do longer workouts at a comfortable level of effort. When you are pressed for time, work a little harder.

Variety in your workouts will keep you fresher physically and mentally than if you do the same thing day after day after day.

That freshness will make it more likely that you exercise consistently. And that is the zone that will result in long-term weight loss.

WASHINGTON POST

DocTalk

Fight the invisible pain

Chronic pain can and should be managed, so that patients can have a better quality of life



Tan Kian Hian

Ms Ma, who is in her early 30s, has a rare inflammatory condition of the blood vessels in her hands and feet. It has led to her having inadequate blood circulation, recurrent infections and ulcerations.

She has lost some fingers and toes due to gangrene and may eventually lose her hands and feet.

That is not all. She is in severe pain all day – a situation she has lived with for the past four years and which is likely to continue.

Her condition may be unusual, but she is not alone.

The World Health Organisation estimates that about 22 per cent of the world's population are living with chronic pain, or pain that persists beyond three months.

Unlike Ms Ma, however, the pain most people suffer from is invisible and, thus, not obvious to others.

Many of my patients put on a brave front, so few people realise they are suffering. They can be experiencing chronic back, neck, joint and nerve pains, all of which may be associated with strokes, diabetes and shingles.

A 2009 survey done in Singapore estimates the number of chronic pain sufferers here to be 8.7 per cent of the population, but this figure is widely believed to be higher.

As doctors, we do know that the chance of having chronic pain rises steeply with age.

In Britain, chronic pain occurs in 62 per cent of those over the age of 75.

With the impending silver tsunami in Singapore, we can expect that chronic pain will become a widespread problem and contribute to the anticipated tenfold increase in elderly healthcare expenditure by 2030.

Here, at the Pain Management Centre in Singapore General Hospital, patient numbers have risen by about 10 per cent annually since the centre opened a decade ago.

The impact of chronic pain on the individual goes beyond numbers. Chronic pain persists even after one has recovered from an illness and has a big physical, functional, emotional, psychological and social impact.

People with chronic pain are likely to suffer from depression, poor sleep, poor appetite and poor self-esteem.

Many patients I see at the clinic



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

are fiercely independent. They want to care for themselves and walk without the need of aids or wheelchairs, which many perceive as a hallmark of dependence and disability. They want to travel or go out without burdening their loved ones with their physical limitations.

But the persistence of severe chronic pain stops many of them from doing so. Those with severe knee pain are unable to walk even 50m, for instance. Many with severe back pain are not able to stand or sit for prolonged periods of time. This loss of physical ability and independence is often tied to a perceived loss of dignity.

There is a strong link between chronic pain and depression, with up to 50 per cent of patients with chronic pain struggling with it.

Chronic pain has tremendous

influence over a person's thoughts and moods, and patients with chronic pain are three times as likely to have depression or anxiety. Similarly, patients with depression are also three times more likely to develop chronic pain.

Sleep disturbances are commonly experienced by patients with chronic pain. Patients who do not sleep well are also more likely to have chronic pain. This leads to increased stress and impaired cognitive ability. Their ability to carry out simple tasks is also affected.

A night of poor sleep often translates to greater pain the next day and vice versa.

To make it worse, many patients feel guilty about having chronic pain. Their inability to perform domestic chores or carry a toddler often profoundly affects their

self-esteem. They feel that they cannot fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

They become irritable, feel lethargic and lose interest in activities, their appetite and the ability to focus on tasks. Inevitably, the patient's relationship with his family and friends is affected.

Chronic pain is also associated with social stigma. In many cultures, expressions of pain are perceived as a weakness as the individual is seen as not being strong enough to overcome or cope with the pain.

Patients may suffer in silence instead of seeking medical attention for their pain. This may lead to low self-esteem and self-worth.

What often compounds the problem is that the pain they experience is invisible. For

instance, severe back pain caused by the degeneration of the spine or compression fractures may not be obvious.

The sharp shooting nerve pain that strikes the face unpredictably in trigeminal neuralgia leaves no marks on the skin.

And the constant and unrelenting pin-poking or burning pain due to diabetes is not visible. Thankfully, chronic pain can be managed.

Take Ms Ma's case. Her pain is complex: There is a constant severe pain in her affected limbs. There are also spikes of severe pain during the changing of wound dressing.

We prescribed her pain medications and she takes stronger painkillers just before the changing of her wound dressings to manage the pain.

Her pain no longer causes her to be constantly irritable. The medications allow her to have a good night's sleep; she is now closer to her son and has fewer emotional outbursts.

She is working with the physiotherapists at the hospital to improve her mobility after the loss of some fingers and toes.

In addition, psychologists and psychiatrists here recognise the impact of pain on her mood and are helping her to manage this through medications and psychotherapy.

Furthermore, medical social workers have helped provide important and essential social support.

All these measures should help to minimise her chances of developing phantom limb pain, after her condition has run its course.

Chronic pain is more common than people think and it can affect anyone. The phrase "I am in pain" should not be a stigma and define who people are.

It is my hope that with greater awareness and understanding, people will start recognising that chronic pain is real and not a weakness.

More importantly, chronic pain can and should be managed to ensure a better quality of life.

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• Dr Tan Kian Hian is the head and senior consultant at the department of pain medicine at the Singapore General Hospital.

Music therapy may help anxious mothers-to-be

WASHINGTON • Before she became a mother, Ms Elizabeth Larsen, 42, of Huntley, Illinois, endured four miscarriages.

The losses were devastating and complicated her feelings about her future pregnancies.

"I was always worried, waiting for the other shoe to drop. I felt broken and depressed," she says.

Looking for ways to soothe her anxiety, her yoga teacher recommended music therapy. Ms Larsen tried it and loved it.

"I wanted to find wellness tools to ensure that my baby and I would have a safe and wonderful birth. Music therapy opened up my bodily senses and helped me to relax," she says.

It might sound unconventional, but recent research suggests that music therapy may lessen symptoms of prenatal anxiety for some women, which in turn may benefit the health of the child.

Unlike traditional psychotherapy where people talk about their problems, music and other expressive arts therapies seem to help people dealing with mental-health issues, including depression, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder, several studies suggest.

Music's role in healing has been promoted for quite some time.

In 1948, a study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, recommended that physicians incorporate music therapy as a part of routine patient care.

By the 1950s, music was being used as a complementary therapy to treat mental-health concerns.

More recently, music therapy has been used to help veterans recover from post-traumatic stress disorder. New studies suggest that singing and listening to music trig-

gers the brain to release oxytocin and dopamine, neurotransmitters and hormones tied to such emotions as joy and love.

A recent study looked specifically at music and mental-health concerns during pregnancy, focusing on 409 pregnant women in the third trimester of their pregnancy.

None of the women had a history of anxiety.

Half of the women received music therapy, which meant listening to a CD of relaxing, instrumental, melodic music three times a week; the other half did not.

After completing therapy, the women who participated in music therapy reported being less anxious than those who did not receive the intervention.

"During pregnancy, fears and anxieties about the health of the baby are very common. Many women in our study were anxious about the stress test, an ultrasound that examines the health of the baby," said Ms Jessica Garcia-Gonzalez, the study's lead researcher.

The study suggests that "anxiety during pregnancy can increase a woman's risk of postnatal anxiety and depression, but music therapy can help reduce stress".

While women know pregnancy can bring physical discomfort such as fatigue, swollen ankles and sleep concerns, many are not aware that maternal mental-health concerns such as depression and anxiety are also common complications of pregnancy.

Postpartum Support International, a non-profit group focused on raising awareness about prenatal and postpartum mood concerns, says that 6 per cent of pregnant women and 10 per cent of new mothers suffer from anxiety right



POSED PHOTO: ST FILE

after birth, while 15 per cent of women struggle with more significant depression after childbirth.

Left unchecked, this anxiety can lead to numerous pregnancy-related health complications.

"Anxiety is associated with prenatal health concerns like pre-eclampsia, pre-term delivery and low birth weight, which is why it's important for women to learn coping strategies to minimise their worries during pregnancy," says Ms Karen Kleiman, a psychotherapist specialising in maternal mental health.

Some pregnant women or new mothers may need a more intensive intervention such as psychotherapy.

But for many, music provides the right antidote to anxiety, especially in the first few harried and sleepless months after giving birth.

Ms Kate Taylor, a board-certified music therapist and birth doula, provides music therapy for pregnant and postpartum women.

"I use music as a teaching tool. We might analyse song lyrics or listen to instruments or music that can aid in relaxation," she says.

"Songs can bring up intense emotions for women, which can help them connect with the baby and openly share their worries and feelings about motherhood."

Music therapy with Ms Taylor helped Ms Larsen cope with the emotional stress of pregnancy.

"During our sessions, we listened to the acoustic guitar. At home, I listened to relaxing music on my headphones.

"The music calmed my anxiety, which helped me stay positive," Ms Larsen says. WASHINGTON POST

Anxiety is associated with prenatal health concerns like pre-eclampsia, pre-term delivery and low birth weight, which is why it's important for women to learn coping strategies to minimise their worries during pregnancy.



MS KAREN KLEIMAN, a psychotherapist specialising in maternal mental health. Recent research suggests that music therapy may lessen symptoms of prenatal anxiety for some women

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Taiwanese travel host Marco Liao eats and plays his way around the world for his programmes, but he says it is not as glamorous as it seems.
ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

TV travel host dines on instant noodles

This can happen when the production team runs out of money, says Marco Liao

Yip Wai Yee
Entertainment Correspondent

Taiwanese TV travel show host Marco Liao insists that his job is not as glamorous as it seems, even if he does get to eat and play his way around the world.

The 41-year-old, who has won

Golden Bell awards for Best Lifestyle Show Host twice – in 2014 and last year – for his travel programmes, tells The Straits Times in Mandarin: “It can get really exhausting. After filming for long hours in the day, we have to check the footage at night to see what we still need. We sleep only about four hours a night.”

There are also times when the production team runs out of money midway through a shoot and they have to dine on instant noodles.

“We’re not always eating as well as it seems on TV,” he says, adding that he has also got very ill, such as the time when he had severe diar-

rhoea in the middle of a six-day trek through China’s Sichuan province. “Still, how can you not love this job? I see and learn so much. I hope the shows are a form of escape for those who do not have the chance to go to these places,” he says.

Liao was in town to promote the fourth and latest season of his hit TV travel programme The Incredible Hidden Gems, which introduces lesser-known locations, some of which are found in popular destinations.

In the new season, he visits a hidden cafe in Vienna, Austria, that was once frequented by composer Mozart, as well as a historic

Marco Liao's travel tips



SCAN TO WATCH



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sorghum factory in Kinmen, Taiwan, among others.

He has hosted other travel programmes such as Discover The Great Silkroad (2013 to 2016), where he trekked through various cities along the legendary Silk Road, as well as Out Of Africa (2018), which introduced audiences to cities in the African continent.

Liao, who is married with no children, is known for his gentle and amiable nature, and has garnered a strong fan following in the Chinese-speaking world.

During his short trip to Singapore – his third time here – he was recog-

nised by people, including a taxi driver who refused to accept payment from him.

He does not consider himself a celebrity, though. “My work is unique, but I’m no celebrity. I see myself as just a guy doing a job.”

He says he is happy to be back in the Lion City.

“Every time I come here, I gain about 2kg because I eat so much. I had mao shan wang durian and kaya toast and, of course, my favourite bak kut teh (pork rib soup). I think I had it three times in two days,” he says with a chuckle.

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How China is influencing Hollywood

HONG KONG • When was the last time you watched a movie with a Chinese villain?

If you cannot remember, that may not be too surprising. Take, for example, the 2012 remake of the Cold War drama Red Dawn. It depicted Chinese enemies invading an American town. At least it did until the script was leaked and angered the Chinese state media.

In the end, MGM spent US\$1 million digitally erasing evidence of the Chinese army and putting in North Koreans instead.

China wields enormous influence over how it is depicted in the movies Americans make and watch. It is part of a broader push by the government to take control of its global narrative and present a friendlier, less menacing image of China to the world.

China’s booming box office and seemingly inexhaustible cash reserves have provided a much-needed boost to Hollywood as it faces slowing ticket sales in the US and challenges from Amazon and Netflix. But Hollywood’s embrace of China has not come without strings attached.

So when the creators of Pixels (2015) wanted to show aliens blasting a hole in the Great Wall of China, Sony executives worried that the scene might prevent the



The Ancient One, introduced by Marvel Comics in the 1960s, was portrayed as an elderly Tibetan man. But in the 2016 movie, Doctor Strange, the character was played by white actress Tilda Swinton (above). PHOTO: WALT DISNEY PICTURES

movie’s release in China, leaked studio e-mails show. They blew up the Taj Mahal instead.

In the 1960s, Marvel Comics introduced a mystical guru character known as the Ancient One into its universe. He was portrayed as an elderly Tibetan man.

But in the 2016 movie Doctor Strange, the Ancient One is Celtic, played by white actress Tilda Swinton. Film-makers changed the character’s ethnicity early in the

process, reportedly to avoid offending the Chinese government.

As recently as two decades ago, major Hollywood movies were sharply critical of China.

Seven Years In Tibet, which depicts Chinese soldiers brutalising Tibetans, was one of the top 100 grossing movies of 1997. That year, Disney also released Martin Scorsese’s Kundun – a sympathetic portrayal of the Dalai Lama’s early life in Mao-era China and his subse-

quent exile in India – despite objections from the Chinese authorities.

“You’re not going to see something like Seven Years In Tibet anymore,” said Dr Larry Shinagawa, a professor at Hawaii Tokai International College, who specialises in Asian and Asian-American studies. Studios that make films critical of China, he said, risk being banned from releasing films in the country.

At stake for China is more than just the validation of Hollywood’s power brokers and celebrities.

President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasised the need to “tell China’s story well” – to make sure a coherent, compelling and, most important, Communist Party-sanctioned narrative of China’s rise to power reaches global audiences.

China has raised its influence in Hollywood by bankrolling a growing number of top-tier films.

Of the top 100 highest-grossing films worldwide from 1997 to 2013, China helped finance only 12 Hollywood films. But in the five years that followed, it co-financed 41 top-grossing Hollywood films.

Hollywood studios are eager to grab a slice of China’s fast-growing box-office market. Success in China can make up for a disappointing box-office performance at home or even transform a hit into a global blockbuster.

One of China’s top movie regulators spelt it out in a speech at the US-China Film Summit in Los Angeles in 2013. “We have a huge market and we want to share it with you,” said Ms Zhang Xun, then president of the state-owned China Film Co-Production.

Then came the condition. “We want films that are heavily invested in Chinese culture, not one or two shots,” she said. “We want to see positive Chinese images.”

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Chinese-American singer-songwriter Wang Leehom performing at the Singapore Indoor Stadium. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Sci-fi concept failed to please

Wang Leehom redeemed himself with love songs after his iffy schtick as an alien

REVIEW / CONCERT

DESCENDANTS OF THE DRAGON 2060
WORLD TOUR IN SINGAPORE
Singapore Indoor Stadium
Last Saturday

Boon Chan

It was not until the eighth song that this felt like a concert with Mandopop star Wang Leehom playing the keyboard and singing the ballad Ni Bu Zai (You're Not Here).

Up till that point, it had seemed like a half-baked B-grade science-fiction musical.

This was meant to be a concept concert, with the Chinese-American singer-songwriter playing the role of a visitor from outer space, here to lead the audience to a place/time called Descendants Of The Dragon 2060, where love, hope and good music could be found.

He made his appearance on stage as though he were stepping off a space vehicle, wearing a metal-studded all-black bodysuit which flared out at the shoulders.

Too bad the concept was iffy and the execution was clunky with Wang harping on the same few points like a broken record.

The low point came with the attack of the Selfish tribe which, gasp, threatened to derail the entire enterprise. An "injured" Wang had to draw strength from the cheers of the 8,000-strong crowd, turning the gig into a call-and-response pantomime.

The fact that the singer was vocally unimpressive did not help matters.

At points, he sounded as though he was straining for the notes and, at others, he was overwhelmed by the loud music.

The song selection was a little odd as it included quite a few lesser-known numbers and excluded many of his R&B tracks and hit ballads. Early favourite Gong Zhuan Zi Zhuan (Revolution) was included but bizarrely mangled with heavily manipulated vocals. And did we really need two performances of Descendants Of The Dragon?

The best part of the almost three-hour-long concert came during the

encore, when the sci-fi conceit was largely abandoned.

It was Wang at his most relaxed as he took requests and bantered happily with the crowd.

He sang Hua Tian Cuo (Mistake In The Flower Fields) a cappella; tickled the ivories as he sang his portion of his popular duet with Malaysian rapper Namewee, Stranger In The North; and played the violin with aplomb as he belted out early hit Julia. He also covered the English number Shallow from the film A Star Is Born (2018).

The segment was a reminder of his impressive musical talent and his ability to pen hits.

The singer last performed in Singapore five years ago and much has changed for him since then. He is now a father of three children, a fact he addressed when he sang the lullaby-like Qin Ai De (Dearest), which was written for his two daughters.

Things got a little schmaltzy when he went on about love, but this was definitely preferable to the alienating alien schtick.

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How Superman gave rise to superhero movies

LOS ANGELES • The poster tagline was "You'll believe a man can fly", but prior to Dec 15, 1978, it was some feat even to imagine how an earnest movie about a man in a red cape and tights could ever get off the ground.

So much was so different on the space-pop continuum then. It was a Hollywood before entire CGI cities and cinematic universes and online fandoms – but, especially, before the discovered charm of Christopher Reeve.

Today, six of the eight top-grossing movies of last year were superhero stories – and last month brought Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse and Aquaman, plus the PG-13 sequel re-cut Once Upon A Deadpool.

And when trying to pinpoint just how Hollywood got here – with most of its billions in box-office receipts swaddled in spandex – the releases of Batman (1989), X-Men (2000), Spider-Man (2002) and Iron Man (2008) stand like crucial mile markers.

Yet director Richard Donner's Superman: The Movie (1978), which celebrated the 40th anniversary of its opening last month, is the true father of superhero cinema – the first such project that captured the masses while also refusing to steer hard towards camp (as had Superman And The Mole-Men in the 1950s and the TV series-related Batman: The Movie feature in the 1960s).

In the years just before the debut of Superman, which has received a 4K restoration release to mark the anniversary, 1975's Jaws birthed the summer-season blockbuster and 1977's Star Wars ushered in a new type of mass-merchandise cam-



Christopher Reeve starred in Superman: The Movie, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of its opening last month. PHOTO: WARNER BROS

paign. So by the winter of 1978 – the same year that Star Wars and Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (1977) received effects Oscars – audiences were primed for an epic science-fiction film adapted from a comic book.

Superman, created four decades earlier by teenagers Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, was a natural candidate – an icon of Americana who also happened to be a superpowered space alien.

Warner Bros, though, was not going to blaze any trails without adhering to some of the hidebound rules of making a big studio picture. That meant securing big stars, a hot director and respected screenwriters.

In the wake of the huge success of the first two Godfather films (1972, 1974), the Superman team went af-

ter star Marlon Brando and writer Mario Puzo, and Donner was hired fresh off his horror hit The Omen (1976).

That was when things began to get bloated. Brando would command a US\$3.7-million payday and a high percentage of the back end for playing Jor-El, Superman's father.

And Puzo's screenplay ran hundreds of pages – about five times the size of a script they could shoot. The production budget would climb to US\$55 million – one of the most expensive movies ever at the time.

Another A-lister, Gene Hackman, was ultimately landed to play villain Lex Luthor. But who could credibly fill the red, blue and yellow tights?

The names of seemingly every big leading man were mentioned for

the title role. But the great casting director Lynn Stalmaster urged consideration of Reeve, a young, lanky, 1.93m Juilliard alumnus who rippled with easy charisma.

Reeve also had a ready chemistry with Margot Kidder, who reportedly beat out Stockard Channing for the role of a spunky Lois Lane. (Kidder died in May last year.)

As mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent, Reeve could do light screwball comedy behind oversized specs – especially after studying Cary Grant in Bringing Up Baby (1938).

Still, the film-makers worried: Wasn't the 77kg Reeve too thin for the part?

Refusing a padded costume, the actor packed on the chiselled pounds with the help of David Prowse, the bodybuilder beneath

the Darth Vader suit.

Reeve was hired for US\$250,000 – or just about what Brando ultimately made per minute in his limited screen time.

Five writers would lay hands to the screenplay, including Oscar-winning Robert Benton and script doctor Tom Mankiewicz. John Williams would provide the triumphant Oscar-nominated score. And in a pre-CGI era, the practical-effects and blue-screen wizardry would boost Superman to a special achievement Academy Award.

As opening day neared, Superman was ramping up as an event – even if it all seemed surreal to Reeve.

"I hardly think of myself as Superman," Reeve told The Washington Post several weeks ahead of the debut, adding: "I think of Supie as a fantasy of ourselves; Clark is a tongue-in-cheek impression of who we are."

Superman opened in more than 700 theatres in the United States to mostly positive reviews.

Reeve had told The Washington Post: "This character Superman is a real part of our American myth."

And he noted of the film's sense of spectacle and heroism: "We take the audience to a place they'd like to escape to."

Filmgoers embraced its soaring sense of escape and reassurance: Superman became one of the year's biggest films, grossing more than US\$300 million worldwide.

Forty years later, Superman, for all its rough edges, has only burnished its stature as a forerunner – a canary in Hollywood's gold mine of superheroes. And he directly inspired the next generation of superhero talent, on the page and on the screen. WASHINGTON POST

Nicole Kidman gets angry for Destroyer



Nicole Kidman plays Erin Bell, an aggressive detective worn down by tragedy, in *Destroyer*. PHOTO: ANNAPURNA PICTURES

The actress says she would growl or let out a big yell before filming to get into character

LOS ANGELES • Nicole Kidman has entered a phase of her career so prolific you could watch her in three movies this autumn alone. Still, you have never seen her do anything quite like *Destroyer*.

In this gritty Los Angeles film noir from director Karyn Kusama, Kidman plays Erin Bell, a detective so worn down by a lifetime of tragedy that she seems barely alive.

Her eyes red-rimmed as she lurches down the street, Erin is propelled by pure rage, and Kidman burrows so deeply into that anger that she becomes unrecognisable.

At a West Hollywood hotel to discuss the film, for which she has received a Golden Globe nomination, Kidman spoke as if she were just awakening from the spell *Destroyer* had cast on her.

Kusama is a “muscular filmmaker and she really pushed me into places I haven’t been before”, Kidman said. “Karyn’s not verbose, she’s tough. She’ll just be like, ‘OK, good.’ But I’m Australian, so I don’t need all that. We could communicate almost telepathically and she protected my space.”

Destroyer was released in the United States just a few days after Kidman appeared in *Aquaman* as the superhero’s queen mother. She can also be seen in this autumn’s *Boy Erased* and will go toe to toe with Meryl Streep in a highly anticipated second season of *Big Little Lies* that runs on HBO this year.

“I’m trying to stay in that place of making interesting choices and staying true to my essence,” she said. “When I get off that, I start flailing.”

Here are edited excerpts from the conversation.

How did you feel the day before you began *Destroyer*?

Terrified. I just felt like I was not going to be able to do it, and then when I showed up on set, I don’t think I spoke to anybody. I shut down, but that’s Erin.

What’s so bracing about Erin is that she doesn’t care about what anyone thinks of her, or even whether she will survive the case she’s working on. Is it freeing to play someone like that or is it scary?

Definitely freeing. She’s a dangerous person. A lot of times, I would let out a huge yell or a growl before I would start, which I know sounds insane.

Well, she’s a very primal character. What was it like to live inside that for the shoot?

It gets you down, carrying the weight of her, because it also has to be real. But there was something amazing about being able to let that energy out. I’ve never done that before in a film.

There’s a scene where I go in and beat up my daughter’s boyfriend and it was the second or third day of shooting.

I said to the guy, “Listen, just watch out.” He said, “No, I can take it.” And I just went there and started pushing him, like whoa. I was angry, really angry.

I don’t think you’ve played a character this aggressive before.

Yeah and I could tell by the way people reacted on the set.

Everyone steered clear of me, but I was taught very early on by (director) Jane Campion, who said to me, “You’re not running for ‘most popular’ when you’re an actor, remem-

ber that. You have to be true to the essence of the character.”

You can be decent to people and show respect to them, but the idea of flitting around and joking, you can’t be doing any of that. Otherwise, it would have felt like I was acting.

The movie cuts between a young Erin and the wrecked, older version. With the aid of make-up and special effects, you play both.

Normally, they’d cast a younger actress, but that would have been a deal-breaker for me. I’m not going to do a character where I can’t play the whole arc of her – it would be unbelievably frustrating.

One of the interesting things about Erin is that when she finds out she’s pregnant, she’s high – and that’s the relationship she starts with her child. That’s fascinating and riddled with pain, and if I can’t play that scene and both sides of this character, that’s just not interesting to me at this stage.

You also get to kick some butt in James Wan’s *Aquaman*, though of course it’s not quite as fraught as *Destroyer*.

I said to James, please just give me some sort of action sequence. It’s nice to show that I can do that and it’s just nice to be in that fantasy world, probably because a lot of the films I do are very hard material. Rarely do I get to do lightweight stuff that’s sort of fun.

We’ll soon see you in a second season of *Big Little Lies*, which you also executive produced. The reaction to the first season was probably one of the biggest of your career.

The biggest ever. Well, *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) was pretty big, but this might be a close second.

The show wasn’t initially conceived to go on for more than one season. How did it feel to revisit the character of Celeste, with all the expectations that now come with it?

We felt the weight. But why not try it? I think that’s a good approach, artistically. Whether you can live up to the expectations and the sense of discovery, I don’t know, but there’s definitely interest in what happens next. Celeste still has damage and has to deal with Meryl’s character (her mother-in-law) and those things are fascinating.

When did you go from wondering whether you should do a new season to knowing that you would?

It was around Emmy time and it was a pure reaction to people going, “This cannot end, you have to give us more.”

I’ve never been on the receiving end of that. It’s fun to give more stories to more women, and we love being together, we love hanging out. Does that warrant making another season? Maybe not, but gosh, it’s a good reason to push for it.

Jean-Marc Vallee directed all the episodes of the first season, but Andrea Arnold is the Season 2 director. You’ve said that working with women behind the camera is a priority for you.

That’s part of why I did *Destroyer*, to support Karyn, and there was a primarily female crew: our (director of photography) was female, our focus-puller, our (first assistant director).

If I have the opportunity to throw my support there, of course I’m going to do that. I need to be part of changing the statistics myself with direct choices I’m making.

NYTIMES

GoAheadQuoteMe



Acting is like a working vacation for me. I can’t wait to go to work. I’m scared about it, I love it.



ACTOR MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY



I still feel I’m just a lodger here.



ENGLISH ACTOR MICHAEL PALIN, who grew up in Sheffield, on London despite living in the city for years



For me, when I had a daughter, my life literally went from zero mermaids to mermaids everywhere from toys to cookies to cartoons to books.



DIRECTOR JASON REITMAN on being a parent

thenewpaper

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Michelle Yeoh on being a ferocious mum

The actress says her own mother is nothing like the domineering Eleanor Young she plays in *Crazy Rich Asians* and she had to draw inspiration from her friends' mums for the role

NEW YORK • Michelle Yeoh was an established martial arts star in Asia by the time Western audiences came to know her, first as a Bond girl and then a balletic warrior in the 2000 hit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

During her action-hero days, she performed her own stunts – like launching herself and the motorcycle she was riding onto a moving train – and was at one point, she said, uninsurable.

Little wonder, then, that her portrayal of imperious mother Eleanor Young in the summer smash *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) was so ferocious.

Now she and her co-stars are nominated for the top prize, outstanding performance by a cast, at the Screen Actors Guild Awards on Jan 27. The film is also up for a Golden Globe for best musical or comedy.

During a recent trip to New York, Yeoh – who is 56 and cut an edgy figure wearing head-to-toe black and a supple motorbike jacket – talked about the film, the racism she encountered in her earlier years and her heartbreak over Myanmar's government under Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Yeoh played in the 2012 biopic *The Lady*.

Here are edited excerpts.

It is almost unfathomable that *Crazy Rich Asians* was the first Hollywood movie with a contemporary setting and a majority Asian-American cast since *Joy Luck Club* in 1993.

Asian communities are so hungry; they never see themselves on the big screen.

Honestly when I first came out here, suddenly to be told I'm a minority was a big shock. I came from China – how did I suddenly switch to being a minority?

We want to be represented, we don't want to be invisible, we don't want to be told that we're not good enough to be on the silver screen. You don't have to treat us special. Just treat us as equals.

Was your mum like Eleanor?

Oh no. My mum is not Eleanor at all. She's not a hippie, but she's very carefree, very outgoing.

Eleanor would be truly my homage to the mothers that I know in Asia. A lot of my friends or my friends' mothers.

Your crazy rich Asian friends?

Ha ha. Yes. And their mothers-in-law. Or their mothers. Because I drew a lot of inspiration from them.

Eleanor was up to the last



moment trying to please her mother-in-law. She wanted her son to look good because she wasn't good enough.

That was the one thing we really, really worked on. We needed Eleanor to be vulnerable to make her more human.

In the book, Eleanor was black-and-white-movies mean. I didn't want her to be a villain. I wanted her to have very high standards, to be very elegant.

But the most important thing, what we really worked on, is the love between the mother and son.

The mahjong scene was great. I take it you know how to play.

Yes, it's my sort of speciality. I had no problem in that scene at all. It was the showdown, right? And the movie could've ended there.

At the end of the day, it wasn't a

prince-Cinderella movie. If you look at all of the women, they all were stronger. They weren't waiting to be rescued.

Eleanor had a very intense presence.

Eleanor was very composed. She didn't talk with her hands. She was very contained.

For a character like that, she has to command a lot of attention, with the stillness. That I worked on.

The Lady was quite contained.

The Lady is. But The Lady is also very emotional on other levels.

How are you reacting to news about the atrocities against Rohingya Muslims under Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership?

Of course I feel very against what is happening to the Rohingya. We do

have a foundation inside Burma.

We felt when the country opened up, it's not the top layer (of society) that needed help. It's the rest.

But they adore her because they really believe she's trying to do whatever she can for the lower people.

They still adore her?

They still feel like that. But the thing is, it's so complicated. I don't believe she has the power.

Maybe she'll hate me for saying this. She has no power. The power is still with the military.

Are you in touch with her?

We are in touch with her. But recently, it has been very difficult because of all the things that have been going on. But she knows that I have been a little bit outspoken about the fact that I've been so dis-

appointed. It's tragic.

With *Crazy Rich Asians*, were there reactions to the film that surprised you?

Asians are quite reserved, but after the movie, they've come up to me on the streets to say: "Can I give you a hug? I just want to say thank you."

The first opening weekend, I was on my knees, because God forbid, if it didn't work, it could've set us back 20 years.

I was shocked by the opening scene, the intense discrimination aimed at Eleanor's family. I thought it couldn't have been like that in the 1990s.

(Yeoh arches a brow and shoots a piercing "Girl, you're so naive" look.) I remember when I first went to Paris, in the late 1980s, early 1990s. Every time I walked into a

store, the women would fold their arms. They wouldn't even speak to me.

So the next day, my ex sent his designer to go shopping with me and doors flew open.

Just like *Pretty Woman*.

You'd be surprised at how racist people were at that time. It's a shame, but I'm glad it's not like that now.

I work with the (United Nations Development Programme) as a goodwill ambassador to promote gender equality, all these things we (need) to have a better world, more peaceful world.

If we don't, we're not going to be able to save our world. We have to work together, start dialogue together and have no judgment. Why are we so judgmental?

NTIMES



While the character of arrogant mother Eleanor Young is portrayed in the book as all-out mean, actress Michelle Yeoh (left) worked on making her film role (above) vulnerable and more human. PHOTOS: NYTIMES, WARNER BROS

Danish shows taking TV world by storm



Actor Lars Mikkelsen won an International Emmy in November for his role of Johannes Krogh in *Ride Upon The Storm*, a Danish television series about faith and a family of Danish priests that is being distributed in almost 80 countries. PHOTO: REUTERS

COPENHAGEN • With original boundary-breaking content, thrilling plots and charismatic actors, Danish television series have captivated audiences worldwide in recent years.

The latest show to hit the small screen is *Ride Upon The Storm*, which is being distributed in almost 80 countries, with a debut in Britain late this month. The new drama was created by screenwriter Adam Price, the Bafta winner behind the acclaimed drama *Borgen* (2010 to 2013), which followed the political and personal tribulations of a Danish woman prime minister.

Danish shows, with both exoticism and gritty realism, have soared in popularity beyond their initial local Scandinavian viewership, Dr Pia Jensen, an Aarhus University communications associate professor specialising in television series, told Agence France-Presse.

Long known for the Nordic noir crime genre, the big international breakthrough for Danish shows came with *The Killing* (2007 to 2012), a hard-hitting series following a Copenhagen female cop's investigations. Then came crime thriller *The Bridge* in 2011.

The Nordic noir genre has proven so popular that its aesthetic and themes are now being replicated beyond Scandinavia's borders, with shows such as *Shetland* and *Broadchurch* made in Britain, Dr Jensen said.

For foreign audiences, Denmark as it is shown on television is "an exotic society, something to aspire to because of the welfare state and the strong women characters", she said, referring also to the 2010 hit *Borgen*. She added, clearly amused, that it is "as if Denmark is the fantasy land of gender equality".

Paradoxically, in this almost utopian world, the characters are "normal" people with whom audiences can identify, according to Dr Jensen.

But now, Danish TV series have moved beyond Nordic noir. *Ride Upon The Storm* is a character-led drama about faith and a family of Danish priests, dominated by Johannes Krogh, a tempestuous god-like father battling numerous demons.

Actor Lars Mikkelsen, known from *The Killing* and his role as the Russian president in Netflix's *House Of*

Cards, plays Johannes, a role for which he won an International Emmy in November.

Mikkelsen "has set new standards for the portrayal of a main character in a TV series", the show's creator Price told Agence France-Presse.

Johannes "is the 10th generation of priests, it's a huge burden that haunts him and he lets it haunt his sons too". His eldest son Christian is lost and at odds with the family and society, while younger son August is married and following in his father's priesthood footsteps before becoming a chaplain for troops stationed in Afghanistan.

"In the Bible, you have lots of stories of fathers and sons and brothers. That was the perfect ground to tell (a story) about masculine relationships, the competitive gene between men in a family," Price said.

Elements from *Borgen* can be seen in his new venture: the efficient prime minister Birgitte Nyborg and Johannes Krogh, who is headed for the top as Bishop of Copenhagen, are both characters passionate about their work.

"But Johannes reacts differently than Birgitte (does) because his ambition is not within the world of politics, but with a more supernatural power," Price said.

Thoughts on faith, religion and spirituality are mixed with a complex study of family.

"Religion is sometimes something imposed, as authority can be imposed on our children in a family. And both are dealt with in *Ride Upon The Storm*," he said.

He is working on *Ragnarok* for Netflix, a six-part Norwegian coming-of-age drama based on Norse mythology, but set in a modern-day high school.

The second season of *Ride Upon The Storm* just wrapped up on Danish public television DR, which produced the series, and had around 500,000 viewers.

A small country of just 5.8 million people, Denmark is proud of its reputation as an innovator on the small and big screen. "Danish producers are mainly thinking of a Danish audience. It has to stay relevant to the Danish public and that's why DR keeps experimenting," Dr Jensen said. "Some of the shows will travel and some won't." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



ST PHOTO: ERNEST LUIS

Bookmark This! A library on fire, haunting by a woman in black

Join Life reporters Toh Wen Li and Olivia Ho (both above) in this new monthly podcast by The Straits Times, in which they talk about books in the headlines and recommend new reads.

In this episode, they chat about *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean, an investigation into the 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire and a love letter to libraries everywhere; and *Melmoth* by Sarah Perry, a neo-Gothic novel in which the guilty are haunted through history by a woman in black.

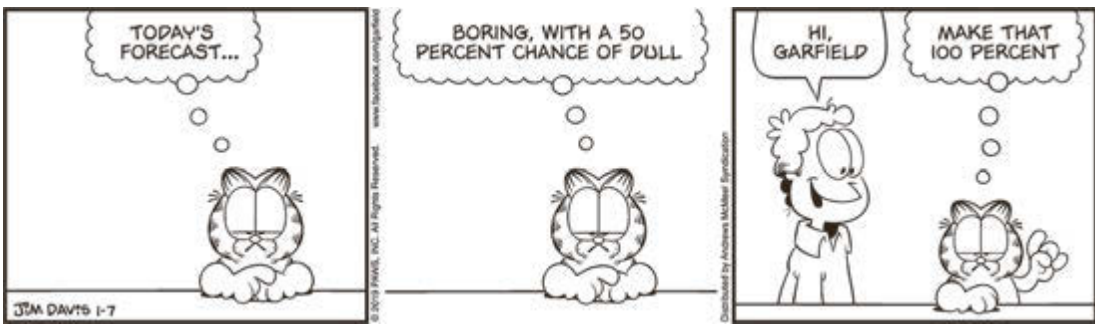
Produced by: Olivia Ho, Toh Wen Li and Ernest Luis
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Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
PM
12.00 Worst Cooks In America 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
1.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 3 (SC)
2.30 Super Mum Super Dad (HD) (V)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 Divided (US) (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 Little Big Shots US 3 (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD) (News)
9.30 Weird Food Diaries (HD) (PG) (IE)
10.00 Avenue 14 (PG13) (D)
11.00 Grimm 6 (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Whacked Out Sports (PG) (V)
12.50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.40 This Is Us (HD) (PG13) (D)
2.30 Euromaxx (Cul)
3.00 Arts 21 (Cul)
3.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
3.55 Worst Cooks In America 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.45 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 3-Plus-13 (V)
7.00 Tuesday Report – Ninety Years Young (CC) (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)

9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Food and Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Body SOS 7 (PG) (CC) (V)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 Focus (CC) (CA)
2.00 Beijing Opera Cats (S)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)
3.30 Love Thy Neighbour (PG) (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Old Taste Detective (CC) (IE) (Debut)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Incredible Tales 8 (HD) (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.00 IWalker – James 4 (HD) (IE)
2.00 Changing Fortunes (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Songs Of Who We Are (IE)
4.00 Find Me A Singaporean 3 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Black Knight (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
6.30 Money Mind
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Enemy Within
11.00 News Now
PM

1.02 Aerial Asia
2.00 News Now
4.02 Edible Wild
4.30 Made In Singapore
5.00 News Now
7.02 Conversation With (CC)
7.30 Super Octogenarians (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Why It Matters 2 (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Aerial Asia
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Money Mind
1.02 Why It Matters 2
2.00 News Now
2.30 Once A Refugee
3.02 Edible Wild
3.30 Made In Singapore
4.00 News Now
4.30 Once A Refugee
5.02 Why It Matters 2
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar
4.30 Enna Nadakuthu 6 (HD)
5.30 Mottu Patlu 3
6.00 Raama Seetha 2
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru 2
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3
8.00 Adukku Veetu Annasamy
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ms V Supreme 2019
10.00 Kannum Kannum Kollaiyadithal
10.30 Bayam
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
9.00 Floogals (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)

11.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)
PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)
1.00 Little Charmers (HD) (P)
1.30 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
2.00 Floogals (HD) (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
3.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)
4.00 All Over The Workplace (S)
4.30 Sherazade: The Untold Stories (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Grizzly & The Lemmings (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 Word Whiz Or Slime Pit (PG) (S)
7.00 Fast & Furriest (CC) (M)
8.25 Minuscule (HD) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (S)
9.00 AFF Suzuki Cup 2018 (HD) (Sports) (Encore)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (HD) (PG) (D)
5.00 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 BoBoiBoy Galaxy (HD) (S)
6.30 E.A.T (HD) (CC) (IE)
7.00 Teratai Kemboja (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Reka (HD) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Mak Cun 4 (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Dara Zara (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)

AM

1.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

You have something new to look forward to and it is time to step up and take the lead again.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Try to deal with life as it really is today. You should be able to stick with tried-and-true solutions.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Your opinions are hardly set in stone. In fact, you could change your mind about something big.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

You need to appeal to people's sense of justice. Lay out the facts and see if they can agree with you.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

People expect you to show leadership. Try to at least take care of basic needs.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Today is all about learning, so you need to try doing things differently to see if you can find a better way.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

You have a deeper understanding of someone who has seemed rather lost. Reach out to him.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Your home life is full of arguments, but you cannot do much about it. Step out and come back later.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

A genuine connection blooms. It could be a random stranger at work, or a potential love.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Money is on your mind but do not obsess about it and your financial obligations will start to make sense.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

It is good to show off a little – your brilliance needs to be recognised. Someone is in awe of your ideas.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)

Ask yourself what you really want, but you should not worry about keeping your dreams realistic.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.30 American Ripper
9.30 Evel Live Supercharged
11.20 Mountain Men 7
PM
12.15 Swamp People 9/1.10 The Pickers 12
2.05 Pawn Stars 18/2.35 Forged In Fire 5
3.30 Evel Live Supercharged
5.20 American Ripper/6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Counting Cars 6/8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6/8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Ancient Aliens 11
10.50 Breaking Mysterious
AM
12.40 Ancient Aliens 11
2.30 Breaking Mysterious
3.25 History Drama: Vikings 5

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Flipping Vegas 3
10.00 Seatbelt Psychic
11.00 The Best Moment To Quit Your Job
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 The Wrong Roommate
3.35 The Rap Game 3
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
7.00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
8.00 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Amanda Knox: Murder On Trial In Italy/11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
AM
12.30 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
1.30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.50 Son Of Rambow/9.25 Ocean's Twelve
11.30 The Big Short (NC16)
PM
1.35 Bridget Jones's Baby (NC16)
3.35 Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Squeakquel/5.00 Underdog/6.20 Liar Liar
7.45 The Matrix Reloaded
10.00 211 (NC16)/11.25 Murder By Numbers
AM
1.20 Collateral Beauty
3.00 Children Of Men (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
7.25 Gods And Generals
11.00 Scooby-Doo! Shaggy's Showdown
PM
12.20 The Brave One (NC16)
2.20 Saturday Night Fever
4.15 Driven/6.10 Hulk
8.30 The Breakfast Club
10.00 The One/11.25 Strike Back 2 (M18)
AM
1.00 Biker Boyz

2.50 The Night Before Halloween (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
10.15 Unlimited Song Season (HD)
11.45 Travel Together 2 (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 Divas Hit The Road 3 (HD)
4.15 Get It Beauty On The Road (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
8.00 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)
9.30 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)/10.00 The King's Woman (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
AM
12.00 Destiny By Love/1.00 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)/2.30 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
8.00 Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 2 Semi-finals 2
10.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Quarter-finals
PM
2.00 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018, Chile Highlights
2.30 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 1 Session 1
5.00 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 1 Session 2
7.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
8.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Quarter-finals
AM
12.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 Abu Dhabi Grand Slam Jiu-Jitsu World Tour 2018 H/Ls – Rio de Janeiro
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 San Miguel Alab Pilipinas Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors
2.30 Other Sports: Ultra Pirineu 2018
3.00 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs Hong Kong Eastern Basketball Team
5.30 National Basketball League Round 12 Brisbane Bullets Vs Melbourne United
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
9.00 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam
9.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs Singapore Slingers
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 26 Nottingham Forest Vs Leeds United
2.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernoots
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 Craig Of The Creek
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time
AM
12.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
1.00 Supernoots

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
8.25 The Elements: Cosentino
9.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
10.05 Valor
10.55 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon
2/11.45 The Amazing Race 30
PM
12.40 Quantico 2
1.35 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.30 Valor
3.25 The Blacklist 5
4.20 Alias 3
5.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
6.10 Instinct
7.00 The Amazing Race 30
7.50 Charlie's Angels
9.45 Hawaii Five-0 9
10.35 MacGyver 3
11.25 Hawaii Five-0 9
AM
12.15 The Blacklist 6
1.10 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
2.00 American Ninja Warrior 7

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 iZombie 4/6.50 Person Of Interest 4
7.40 Lethal Weapon 2/8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Mentalist 5/10.10 iZombie 4
11.00 Gotham 5/11.50 Hall Pass
PM
1.30 Friends 7/2.20 iZombie 4
3.10 The Big Bang Theory 12
3.35 Young Sheldon 2
4.00 The Mentalist 5

4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Person Of Interest 4
6.30 The Mentalist 5
7.20 Friends 7
8.10 Breaking The Magician's Code
9.00 Blended
11.05 Green Lantern
AM
1.05 Friends 7
1.30 iZombie 4

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 4
8.35 Most Ridiculous
9.00 Billy On The Street 5
9.25 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.50 Mr Bean
10.20 Most Ridiculous Asia With GB Labrador
10.45 Almost Royals
11.15 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.30 Margaret Cho And Friends
1.15 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.40 Inside Comedy
2.35 Mr Bean
3.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.30 Most Ridiculous Asia With GB Labrador
3.50 Almost Royals
4.20 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.05 Key & Peele 4
5.55 The Daily Show 24
6.20 Caraoke Showdown
6.45 The Fuccons
6.55 Your Face Or Mine 4
7.20 Most Ridiculous
7.45 Billy On The Street 5
8.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.30 Just For Laughs Gags 14
8.55 Caraoke Showdown
9.20 Lip Sync Battle 3
10.10 Stand-up, Asia!
11.05 Caraoke Showdown
11.30 The Daily Show 24
11.55 Above Average Presents
AM
12.00 Funny As Hell 4
12.25 Saturday Night Live 43
1.15 Key & Peele 4
2.05 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster
AM
12.00 Chronicle Of Love
1.00 Entrepreneurial Age
2.00 First Love

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Jost's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kevin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:10am/7:13pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 7:57am/8:16pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 12.45am (2.8m), 5.45am (1.6m), 11.30am (3m), 6.07pm (0.5m). Desaru: 12.26am (2.8m), 5.48am (1.9m), 10.35am (2.6m), 5.31pm (0.7m). Port Dickson: 1.37am (0.3m), 7.23am (2.6m), 2.20pm (0.6m), 8.01pm (2.4m). Mersing: 6.03am (2m), 10.07am (2.4m), 4.57pm (0.9m), 12.17am (3.3m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 1.13am (2.8m), 6.18am (1.6m), 12.01pm (3.1m), 6.41pm (0.5m). Desaru: 12.56am (2.8m), 6.20am (1.9m), 11.13am (2.6m), 6.05pm (0.7m). Port Dickson: 2.09am (0.3m), 7.55am (2.6m), 2.45pm (0.6m), 8.32pm (2.4m). Mersing: 6.35am (2m), 10.51am (2.4m), 5.32pm (0.9m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

Vivian Chow, Joe Nieh celebrate 10th anniversary

Timothy Goh

Fans speculated more than once that their relationship was doomed.

But Hong Kong singer-actress Vivian Chow, 51, and writer Joe Nieh, 54, have proven them wrong. The pair celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary last Saturday.

Shortly after midnight, Chow posted a photograph of her with Nieh, who was holding a cake decorated with the words “Vivian n Joe”, surrounded by frosting hearts.

The photo, which appeared on Chow's Facebook and Instagram accounts, was captioned “Once upon a time... happily ever after. Just to make a long story short. Our 10th Wedding Anniversary!”

Despite her age, 1990s pop icon Chow is known for her seemingly eternal girlish looks. In October last year, her appearance on China's Mask Singer Season 3 was met with Chinese netizens praising her complexion and figure.

Chow has been together with Nieh, the son of famous novelist Ni Kuang, for about 30 years. How-

ever, their relationship was not always smooth sailing.

In 2008, Nieh was photographed kissing a college student while he was at a club. While he later claimed he had been drunk and did not even know the girl's name, this led to him and Chow, who had been dating for 19 years at the time, announcing that they would part ways.

But to the surprise of many, the pair got back together within a week and tied the knot the next year.

In 2014, various Hong Kong media outlets reported that the couple's relationship was on the rocks, with Nieh and Chow sleeping in separate rooms. Chow dismissed the claims.

She acted in her first TV drama in 1990, but took a break from show business in 1997 when her contracts expired.

Since then, she has returned to the stage occasionally and made several appearances in films, the most recent being Cafe, Waiting, Love in 2014. She also released a gospel album the same year.

timgoh@sph.com.sg



Hong Kong singer-actress Vivian Chow posted a photograph of herself with husband Joe Nieh, who was holding a cake, yesterday. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ VIVIAN CHOW

DeGeneres wants Hart back as Oscars host



NEW YORK • During an interview with comedian Kevin Hart (left) broadcast last Friday, television host Ellen DeGeneres offered a lengthy defence of Hart and said that she called someone at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to request that he be reinstated as host.

Almost a month ago, Hart stepped down from that role after a backlash over past comments he had made that were considered homophobic.

“I called the academy today because I really want you to host the Oscars,” DeGeneres told Hart. “I was so excited when I heard that they asked you. I thought it was an amazing thing. I knew how important it was and how it was a dream.”

It was unclear whom she spoke to. The academy did not respond to

a request for comment and has not announced a replacement host for Hart.

Hart told DeGeneres that he took responsibility for his past comments, which include a now deleted tweet from 2011.

He told her that he was re-evaluating whether to host the Oscars (it is unclear if that decision is up to him).

But last Friday, Variety posted an interview it conducted with Hart, before he had spoken to DeGeneres, in which he shut the door on ever hosting the Oscars.

“Would I ever do it?” Hart had said, according to Variety. “No, it's done. It's done. In my mind I got the job, it was a dream job and things came up that simply prohibited it from happening. But I don't believe in going backwards.” NYTIMES

Buzzing

BTS pick up more awards

BTS kicked off the new year with more awards, as the K-pop sensation won the Digital Bonsang and the Global V Live Top 10 Best Artist awards at the 33rd Golden Disc Awards held in Seoul last Saturday, The Korea Herald reported.

The Best Boy Group award went to Wanna One, which officially disbanded last Monday, while the Best Girl Group award went to GFriend.

Judge rejects Sheeran's lawsuit request

An American judge has rejected English singer and songwriter Ed Sheeran's request to dismiss a lawsuit accusing him of lifting from Marvin Gaye's 1973 classic Let's Get It On for his 2014 smash Thinking Out Loud, Reuters reported.

In a decision made public last Thursday, United States District Judge Louis Stanton in Manhattan said a jury should decide whether Sheeran, Sony/ATV Music Publishing and Atlantic Records should be liable to the estate and heirs of the late producer Ed Townsend, who co-wrote Let's Get It On with Gaye.

Britney Spears on ‘indefinite work hiatus’

LOS ANGELES

• Britney Spears (right)

said last Friday she was pulling out of her upcoming Las Vegas concerts and other work commitments to be with her family after her father was taken ill.

Spears, 37, said in an Instagram post that her father Jamie was hospitalised late last year and “almost



died”. “We're all so grateful that he came out of it alive, but he still has a long road ahead of him. I had to make the difficult decision to put my full focus and energy on my family at this time,” the Toxic singer wrote.

Spears was due to start a new series of concerts, called Britney: Domination, in Las Vegas on Feb 13 and perform there until August.

Her representatives said in a statement that Mr Spears spent 28 days in a Las Vegas hospital after his colon ruptured two months ago.

They said he was recuperating at home and expected to make a full recovery.

They said Britney Spears would take an indefinite work hiatus, putting her Britney: Domination residency on hold until further notice.

Mr Spears is credited with reviving the career of his teen sensation daughter after her life spiralled out of control in 2007 and 2008.

He also became the court-appointed conservator of her business affairs. REUTERS

More blacks directed top films in US, study says

NEW YORK • A historically high number of top movies had black directors last year, according to a sweeping study, released last Friday, that examined diversity behind the scenes and in studio boardrooms.

While 2018 was a banner year for black directors – with 16 working on the top 100 films – 15 of those 16 directors were men; the one woman in that group was Ava DuVernay (A Wrinkle In Time).

The overall figure was up from six black directors working on the top 100 films in 2017 and eight in 2007.

Surveying the 1,200 top-grossing films from 2007 to last year, researchers found that just over 4 per cent had female directors, which meant that they were outnumbered by their male counterparts by a ratio of 22 to one.

And Asians represented just 3.6 per cent of last year's top 100 grossing directors, a number that

changed little over 12 years, according to the study Inclusion In The Director's Chair?.

Broken down by ethnicity, Sony released the most films by black directors last year – five – while Warner Bros released none.

However, Warner Bros did release two films by Asian directors, out of a total of four Asian-directed films released by seven major entertainment companies last year.

NYTIMES

Show revisits sex abuse claims against singer R. Kelly

NEW YORK • A six-hour documentary series airing over the weekend has brought American R&B star R. Kelly back into the spotlight, revisiting accusations of criminal misconduct, including having sex with several minors.

The Lifetime cable network show that premiered last Thursday and broadcast subsequent episodes last Friday and last Saturday shed new light on charges against the artist, whose real name is Robert Sylvester Kelly.

Known especially for his hit I Believe I Can Fly, the 51-year-old singer and producer was charged in 2002 with filming sex acts between him and a 14-year-old girl, but was ultimately acquitted in 2008.

The team behind Surviving R. Kelly held dozens of interviews filmed with members of the singer's inner circle.

In the documentary, back-up singers detailed sexual relations between R. Kelly and three girls under the age of 16, including 15-year-old

star Aaliyah, who died in 2001 in a plane crash. Aaliyah's mother Diane Haughton called the allegations “fabrications”.

In the documentary directed by film-maker Dream Hampton, women portray R. Kelly as manipulative, violent and focused on young girls, allegedly demanding they call him “daddy”.

Neither R. Kelly nor his record label RCA responded to queries by Agence France-Presse.

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B| HOME

280

NUMBER OF KRISFLYER MEMBERS WHO HAD THEIR DETAILS EXPOSED DUE TO SOFTWARE BUG **B2**



Vulnerable adults get greater protection now

Act that came into force in Dec gives social workers new avenue when family is uncooperative

Lim Min Zhang

Social workers who need a court order to assess the well-being of vulnerable adults despite uncooperative family members have had the process of doing so clarified, with

the development of guidelines in the past few months.

Other powers granted by an Act to help vulnerable adults that came into force last month include a protection order to restrain abusers from inflicting further harm, and prohibiting them from entering

such an adult's residence.

The Vulnerable Adults Act (VAA), passed in Parliament last May, provides an additional avenue for social workers to turn to when other attempts at engaging the family of the adult – typically an elderly person – have failed.

In response to media queries, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) said recently that there have not yet been instances where the Act had to be invoked as it was brought into force only on Dec 19.

In the meantime, MSF has worked with medical professionals, social service agencies, the police and the courts to develop standard operation procedures and assessment guides, including a final round of briefings with community agencies in October last year.

MSF officers have also received specialised training on case assessments and interventions, including the protocols that should be adhered to if the VAA powers are invoked, said the ministry.

A vulnerable adult is an individual aged 18 or older who, because of a physical or mental infirmity, disability or incapacity, cannot protect himself from harm.

MSF said more than half of the vulnerable adults it has encountered are above 60 years old, with most of them being women.

There are a range of orders that could be applied for by MSF's adult protection officers or by approved welfare officers, depending on what is needed in each case, and the process is similar to applying for a child protection order, said senior social worker Kristine Lam, manager of Care Corner Project START, one of Singapore's three family-violence specialist centres.

MSF said most vulnerable-adult cases are managed by such commu-

Case of 'mistreated mum' shows hurdles faced by social workers

An elderly woman is suspected to have been mistreated by her daughter, who occasionally does not allow social workers to speak with her mother.

The daughter, who is in her 50s, had admitted to making her mother sleep on the floor, not allowing her to leave the flat or speak with anyone, not changing her diapers regularly and overdosing her on sleeping pills, among other acts, said senior social worker Kristine Lam.

It took three weeks for social workers to gain access to the mother, who is in her 80s, but that process could be shortened with powers granted under the new Vulnerable Adults Act (VAA), said Ms Lam, who is manager of Care Corner Project START.

The Act came into force last month but has not been invoked thus far, said the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

"The daughter knows that whatever she did was wrong, but she continued to do so," said Ms Lam. "If we were unable to convince the daughter, we would likely have to continue to wait till the elderly woman gets to leave the flat, which may be weeks or months later. With VAA, we would be able to get entry earlier, minimising the risk to the mother's welfare."

This case highlighted the complexity of the issues faced by vulnerable adults, she said, as doctors who assessed the mother were unable to give social workers the green light to put her in a shelter as she did not give consent even though she knew she was being abused.

Social workers, together with her neighbours and befrienders, have been scheduled to visit the flat weekly. Her doctors have also been told to keep an eye out for the medication dispensed to her to reduce the chances of overdosing.

"Invoking the VAA should be a last resort because it is ultimately quite intrusive," said Ms Lam. "However, there will be situations where family members will, for whatever reason, continue to use violence on the vulnerable person and refuse to work with community agencies."

Lim Min Zhang

[MORE POWERS continued on B2](#)



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Over 280 KrisFlyer members' details exposed due to software bug

Glitch affected those who logged in on SIA website on Friday; data privacy watchdog probing case

REVIEW TO BE CARRIED OUT

We have established that this was a one-off software bug and was not the result of an external party's breach of our systems or members' accounts. The issue has been resolved and we will carry out a detailed review to ensure this will not happen again. The protection of our customers' personal data is of utmost importance to SIA, and we sincerely regret the incident.



SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Tee Zhuo

The personal details of over 280 KrisFlyer members may have been seen by other customers due to a software bug affecting Singapore Airlines' (SIA) website last Friday.

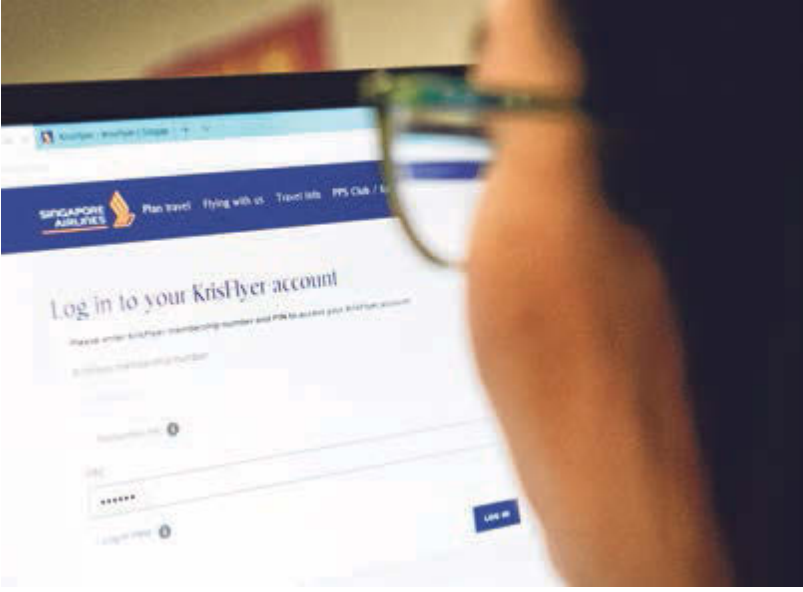
"We have been made aware of a number of cases in which a customer (who) logged in to his or her KrisFlyer account, under certain specific conditions, may have been able to see selective details of another customer," an SIA spokesman said in response to queries.

These details may have included names, e-mail addresses, account numbers, membership tier statuses, KrisFlyer miles and rewards, travel history and, in seven cases, passport details.

The spokesman added that the breach occurred when any two members logged in to their KrisFlyer accounts and accessed transactions displaying their membership information at the same time, while also being assigned the same server by the system.

The software bug arose from a change to SIA's website homepage on Friday, and the incident occurred between 2am and 12.15pm.

Investigations based on system logs determined 284 cases in total. On Saturday, Facebook user Tri-



The data breach occurred when any two KrisFlyer members logged in to their accounts and accessed transactions displaying their membership information at the same time, while also being assigned the same server by the system, said an SIA spokesman. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

cia Leo said in a post that when she logged in to her KrisFlyer account, she realised that she could see another person's e-mail address on her profile page.

"I tried a new login and I could see his entire history, upcoming trips, miles," she wrote.

"If organisations that demand our personal data don't guard our in-

formation properly, then they need to be called out on it."

In a statement, SIA said that no changes were made to members' accounts and no credit card details were disclosed.

"We have established that this was a one-off software bug and was not the result of an external party's breach of our systems or members' accounts," the airline said. "The issue has been resolved and we will carry out a detailed review to ensure this will not happen again."

"The protection of our customers' personal data is of utmost importance to SIA, and we sincerely regret the incident," it added.

SIA is following up directly with affected customers, and has voluntarily informed the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC).

A PDPC spokesman confirmed that it had been notified of the incident, and said that the commission was looking into it.

The incident comes after a number of data leak cases here last year.

The Straits Times reported in August that more than 4,300 Shangri-La International Hotel Management rewards club members – including "a small number" of Singapore customers – had details like names and e-mail addresses leaked.

In July, ST reported that some 3,000 RedMart customers were affected by a data breach that leaked their e-mail addresses and put them at risk of phishing.

The same month, it was reported that Singapore suffered its worst cyber attack when hackers stole the personal particulars of over 1.5 million patients from SingHealth.

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Myanmar maids mark Independence Day with song and dance



Myanmar domestic workers dressed in their ethnic costumes performing a dance as the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (Fast) celebrated Myanmar's 71st Independence Day, which fell on Friday. Yesterday's event was held at the Fast Befrienders Clubhouse in Jalan Bukit Merah. Besides such song and dance performances featuring Myanmar's traditional dances, there were mini talent competitions and showcases. One highlight of the programme was the Best Myanmar Traditional Dress Competition. The guests were treated to delicious authentic Myanmar snacks, bringing back fond memories of home for some. About 300 people attended the celebration. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Adult protection officers given more powers

FROM B1

nity agencies or MSF's social service offices, which provide support such as financial assistance and counselling.

"Such help is aimed at stabilising the family environment and restoring the relations between the vulnerable adult and caregiver," it added.

In addition, hospitals such as Ng Teng Fong General Hospital also help to identify and assess risks faced by vulnerable adults, and recommend interventions.

Ms Long Chey May, who is a mas-

ter medical social worker at the hospital, said the vulnerable adults who show up at the emergency department or specialist outpatient clinics usually present themselves with physical signs and symptoms such as poor hygiene and unkempt appearance which "warrant attention and assessment".

If family and community intervention efforts are ineffective, MSF can step in and apply for court orders under the VAA if the vulnerable adult has experienced, is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect and self-neglect, and

if such orders are necessary for his protection and safety, said MSF.

Certain orders under the VAA could be applied for by approved welfare officers, including from community agencies, or by a vulnerable adult's appointed deputy to the family court.

These orders include prohibiting a person from communicating with or visiting a vulnerable adult, and granting the vulnerable adult the right of exclusive occupation of specific premises.

Other orders, such as a placement order to relocate the vulnerable adult to a temporary shelter, must be applied for by MSF's adult protection officers. These powers were not available before the VAA was passed.

A family court judge can call for family members to make representations to allow the judge to decide whether a court order should be given. These decisions can be appealed.

Before the VAA was introduced, MSF had established the Adult Protective Service to protect vulnera-

ble adults in 2015. It has handled about 110 cases a year involving vulnerable adults since then.

In many of these cases, it is the caregivers, including family members, that are the perpetrators, said MSF.

Ms Cherylene Aw, centre director of Trans Safe Centre, said the number of cases seen at the Adult Protective Service is "certainly the tip of the iceberg".

About 15 per cent of those helped by the centre in Bedok – which provides help to victims of abuse, people who abuse their families, and affected family members – are vulnerable adults.

On how the VAA is beneficial, Ms Lam cited a recent case of an elderly woman who is suspected to have been mistreated by her daughter. It took her team three weeks to gain entry to assess the mother as the daughter did not allow them to visit the elderly woman at first. With the VAA, they could intervene earlier in such instances.

Ms Aw said that for the majority of the cases Trans Safe Centre han-

dles, there is no need to invoke the Act. "However, for cases in which we are really stuck – for example, the family cannot be engaged – the Act provides an additional avenue for us to take action," she said.

This is especially for cases where the family member using violence – usually a son or daughter – also has vulnerabilities such as chronic mental illness, intellectual disability and financial hardship, she added, emphasising that each vulnerable adult's needs and challenges are different.

MSF said that, as far as possible, it will try to place vulnerable adults with other family members who can take care of them, and avoid placing them in care institutions.

Added Ms Aw: "It's a delicate balancing act, to take into account the vulnerable adult's right to self-determination and dignity while looking out for his best interest."

"Even if their mental capacity has been lost, their past wishes, values and feelings should be considered."

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60

More than half of the vulnerable adults whom the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has encountered are above this age, with most of them being women.

110

Number of cases a year involving vulnerable adults which MSF has handled under the Adult Protective Service, which was set up in 2015, before the Vulnerable Adults Act was introduced.

Team from NTU is reaching for the Moon

It aims to collect first Singapore snapshots of lunar landscape in five years' time

Chang Ai-Lien
Science Editor

For satellite veteran Lim Wee Seng, the Moon's the limit.

The executive director of Nanyang Technological University's Satellite Research Centre, who has eight home-grown satellites in orbit and is launching his ninth "baby" in Japan this month, has ambitious plans to build and fly a small satellite that will circle the celestial body, collecting the first Singapore snapshots of the lunar landscape.

"The idea is to explore the unknown and inspire future generations of scientists in the field," he told The Straits Times.

"As a university, we are always trying to do something different and push the frontiers."

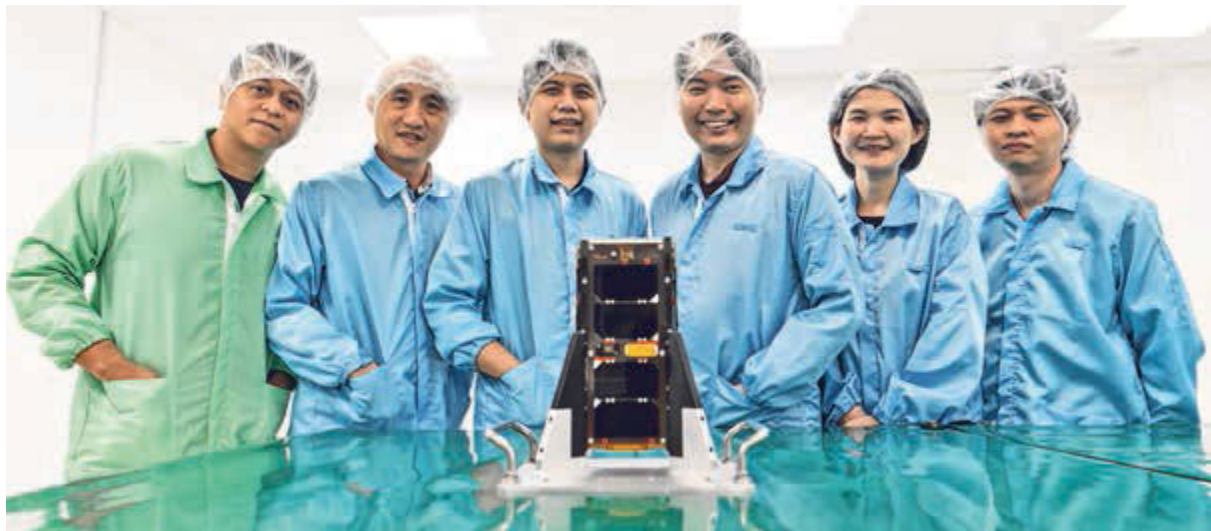
By learning from and improving on each successive satellite launched, he believes that he can achieve this feat in five years. And if he succeeds, the satellite, at less than 100kg, will be smaller than any other that has made the long journey to date, he said.

The effort is within reach because the Republic's fledgling space industry is taking flight, say experts.

China made headlines around the world last Thursday for landing a robotic spacecraft on the far side of the Moon, an effort seen as a major milestone in space exploration, which boosted the country's efforts to become a leading power in space exploration like the United States and Russia.

Unlike space superpowers, with their lofty goals of touching down on planets such as Mars, however, Singapore's niche is in cheaper-to-build small satellites and high-end design, technology and manufacturing. The country is vying for a slice of the lucrative space economy, which was worth US\$383.5 billion (\$522 billion) worldwide in 2017, according to research organisation Space Foundation.

Former Science Centre Singapore chief Chew Tuan Chiong pointed out that space exploration is the domain of large countries.



NTU Satellite Research Centre team members (from left) Richard Bui, Lim Sir Yang, Lew Jia Min, Joshua Tay, Amy Wong and Benjamin Tan with the Aoba-Velox IV nanosatellite, which will be launched in Japan later this month. They are learning from and improving on each successive satellite launched. PHOTO: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

"It is quite unlikely for Singapore to undertake it directly, not least because of negligible immediate economic returns. However, research into space technology has produced good commercial and military spin-offs, so I believe it would be appropriate for many of our research institutes to participate in such research in collaboration with the leading space agencies."

Singapore Space and Technology Association president Jonathan Hung said: "We're not the US or China, but there are other areas we can do well in."

"We have to compete smartly with our limited resources, so our focus is not manned space exploration, but research and development and technology."

One area is miniature satellites, which are much cheaper and easier to create compared with their giant predecessors. In the early days, they weighed a few thousand kilograms, were prohibitively expensive and took years to build, noted Professor Low Kay Soon, director of the Satellite Technology and Research Centre at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

With technological advances, however, satellites at a fraction of that weight have been gaining popularity. These can be built and launched in fleets of tens or hundreds, which would allow for better, faster coverage across wide swathes of Earth, for purposes such as Earth imaging or collection of weather data.

Said Prof Low: "The new trend in the space industry is towards building and launching multiple miniaturised satellites for new applications. In what is known as the 'new space' industry, Singapore can focus on establishing itself as a key technology provider for miniaturised satellites."



INSPIRING FUTURE SCIENTISTS

The idea is to explore the unknown and inspire future generations of scientists in the field. As a university, we are always trying to do something different and push the frontiers.



SATELLITE VETERAN LIM WEE SENG (above), on ambitious plans to build and fly a small satellite that will circle the Moon, collecting the first Singapore snapshots of the lunar landscape.

At NUS, for example, there are three satellite programmes and it is currently building five small satellites, each weighing between 20kg and 50kg. Among the centre's key research are the design

and development of three satellites flying in formation.

Mr Hung estimates there are at least 40 firms in the industry here, from start-ups all the way to multinationals, working in areas that range from improved sensors and systems to laser communications and low-cost rocket launchers.

The association is also holding the region's largest space-related conference next month, which will be attended by more than 700 participants from international space agencies, governmental bodies, research institutes and other organisations the world over.

Science Centre Singapore chief executive Lim Tit Meng noted: "There is a great amount of interest in space exploration and research in Singapore."

The annual space conference, he pointed out, has created an ongoing conversation on space technology within the region. There are also more tie-ups between local universities and regional institutes in areas such as remote sensing, designing and launching satellites in space.

And at the Science Centre, there has been growing public interest in astronomy at its weekly stargazing sessions and during rare astronomical events such as the Super Blue Blood Moon last year.

"With our younger generation's growing interest in astronomy, I am certain we will witness more Singaporeans contributing to space developments, research and maybe even one day up in space," he said.

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Some 300 pines and firs were collected at the Singapore Zoo's carpark on Saturday after the Wildlife Reserves Singapore appealed to the public to donate their Christmas trees so that beavers and other animals at the zoo and River Safari can have new objects to explore. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Tree-mendous response to WRS' appeal

300

Number of live Christmas trees received at the Singapore Zoo's carpark on Saturday.

The lucky animals at Singapore Zoo cannot see the wood for the trees these days, thanks to the hundreds of post-Christmas pines and firs that were donated on Saturday.

The leafy deluge will give River Safari star Justin Beaver and his furry buddies plenty to bark about in the coming weeks, and it is all thanks to the many Singaporeans who heeded the call of the Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS).

Some 300 live Christmas trees were received at the zoo's carpark on Saturday from 9am until 2pm as part of an initiative started in

2017 by WRS to boost the animals' well-being.

Several WRS employees had shared the appeal for Christmas trees informally in the past week, including veteran zookeeper Kumaran Sesshe, who wrote a Facebook post last Saturday from the perspective of Justin Beaver: "Hi, I'm Justin Beaver! My animal friends and I at WRS are always looking for something to gnaw, scratch, sniff and play with."

Anyone with "real, lush and green" Christmas trees to spare after the festive season could donate them to the WRS, added "Justin".

Beavers chew on wood to help keep their teeth sharp and prevent them from growing too long.

The trees will also give some of the animals at the zoo and River Safari an avenue to explore new and unfamiliar objects, just as they would naturally in the wild.

WRS said in a Facebook post on Saturday: "It's a wrap everyone! Thank you for the overwhelming response, our Christmas minions have closed the tree donation point. Thanks for donating your Christmas trees to Justin Beaver and his friends. Stay tuned to see what our animals get up to with the trees soon."

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It's a dog-meet-dog world



It was a bark-worthy event yesterday at the Singapore Botanic Gardens for many Shetland sheepdogs – or Shelties – and their owners. About 200 people and nearly 100 dogs joined the Singapore Sheltie Lovers Club – a non-profit organisation – to unleash their enthusiasm at the largest such gathering here which is set to be in the Singapore Book of Records. A quick doggie headcount was done at 5pm at the Cluny Park Gate before the Shelties and their owners trotted off on a 2km walk.
ST PHOTOS: JASMINE CHOONG

Bursary awards for over 1,100 students in Teck Ghee

Awards recognise not just academic efforts but good character as well, says PM Lee

Cheryl Teh

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong presented more than 1,100 bursary awards to deserving students residing in the Teck Ghee area. The presentation ceremonies took place on Saturday and yesterday at Townsville Primary School. A total of 380 students received the Teck Ghee Citizens Consultative Committee Bursary Awards, and 779 received the Ministry of Education Edusave Awards. At the ceremony yesterday, Mr Lee, who is also an MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC, praised the recipients for their efforts and achievements. He said: "These Edusave Merit

Bursary and Edusave Character awards not only recognise your academic efforts and achievements. Just as importantly, they also affirm your character and strengths, and how you help others around you." Mr Lee also advised them to not only be well-educated citizens, but also to understand the world around them, and have the resilience and determination to overcome adversity, to prosper and thrive in the world. This includes "being willing to serve the common good, taking pride in our country, and standing up for it". In his speech, Mr Lee singled out several outstanding students, including Chloe Wee Xin Lei. A primary 6 pupil at Townsville Primary,

she received the Edusave Award for Achievement, Good Leadership and Service, and the Edusave Character Award. Mr Lee mentioned in his speech that Chloe was voted in as a class councillor, and is well liked and respected by her classmates. She is also a cyber wellness ambassador at school, where, for example, she helps her peers use appropriate language on social media platforms. Mr Lee also said that Chloe demonstrated empathy with her friends, voluntarily helping a classmate with behavioural difficulties adjust to life at school. "When he disrupted class activities by throwing chairs and slamming doors and others were scared, I helped him to calm down," Chloe said. "I want to be of help to other students in the future too."

tienli@sph.com.sg



Townsville Primary School pupil Chloe Wee Xin Lei receiving her awards from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

NOT JUST ABOUT GRADES

These Edusave Merit Bursary and Edusave Character awards not only recognise your academic efforts and achievements. Just as importantly, they also affirm your character and strengths, and how you help others around you.

PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG, in praising all the recipients for their efforts and achievements.

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- Janice Chan, Hwa Chong Institution

★★★★★

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- Arshnavi, Anderson JC

★★★★★

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Celebrate well into the new year with delicious food and relaxing getaways. PHOTOS: RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA, SHERATON TOWERS SINGAPORE

Toast to a new year

Keep up the festive spirit at these choice locations

BY RACHEL TAN

By now, you have probably exchanged all your Christmas gifts, and downed the last of your bubbly from the fridge. But who says that the celebrations and gatherings have to end?

Whether you want to head out for an exquisite dinner with your other half or prefer a rejuvenating getaway with friends, you can have a memorable gathering at these spots.

Creative and powerful flavours

table65 is Resorts World Sentosa's latest celebrity chef dinner-service only restaurant, helmed by award-winning Dutch chef Richard van Oostenbrugge (right) who recently earned one Michelin star for his Restaurant 212 in Amsterdam.

Whether you opt for a five- or eight-course menu, you will be treated to critically-acclaimed contemporary European cuisine that marries traditional European flavours with international influences, with emphasis on pure and natural tastes.

Savour the chef's hearty and umami-packed dish, Foie gras kombu-jime, which features foie gras that has been cured between sheets of Japanese kombu and topped with umeboshi, sitting in a clear, sweet seaweed broth. Don't miss other signatures such as the Veal tartare 'os à moelle' with Beluga caviar



with smoked herring, clams and bone marrow; and the stunning dessert, Apple — a Granny Smith apple sorbet core in a transparent blown sugar dome.

Wine connoisseurs will love table65's cellar of old world vintages. This includes the famed First Growth Bordeaux wines, which promise to round off a splendid meal.

The chef's contemporary creations are not only a treat for the tastebuds, but also the eyes. All guests enjoy front-row seats at a long chef's table surrounding the entire kitchen, which forms the centrepiece of the restaurant's main dining area. The experience is further accentuated by a show-stopping amuse-bouche levitated above the table and playful visual projection storytelling, using lights and physics to create culinary theatrics.

table65 opens only from 6.30pm to 10.30pm, Thursdays to Mondays.

Rejuvenating getaway

Whether you need a breather from the hubbub of festivities or a reason to get away and gather for more celebrations with friends, Sheraton Towers Singapore's room package exclusive has you covered.

Enjoy perks such as a sumptuous breakfast buffet spread and complimentary Cocktail of the Month for two at the Lobby or Pool Bar with a minimum booking of a one-night stay from Jan 25. Rates start from \$260. Terms and conditions apply.

Call 6839-5755 or e-mail reservations@sheratonsingapore.com for enquiries and reservations.

TOP PICKS



Treats for the family

Don't miss Swissôtel Merchant Court, Singapore's Prosperity Takeaway Treats. Available from Jan 18 to Feb 19, they include goodies such as Prosperity Abalone Yu Sheng (\$98 for 10 diners) and Braised Buddha's Temptation Claypot (\$428 for 10 diners). Enjoy a 20 per cent discount on orders made before Jan 31. Call 6239-1847/1848 or e-mail dining.merchantcourt@swissotel.com for enquiries or orders.

Quality grains

Royal Umbrella Rice is known for its Thai Hom Mali long-grain rice, which is aromatic and naturally fragrant when cooked. A team of rice specialists works with Thai Hom Mali rice farmers to ensure proper cultivation processes to produce top-quality rice. It is also DNA-tested to ensure that the rice is 100 per cent Thai Hom Mali with no adulterant. Visit royalumbrellarice.com for more details.



Festive goodies



Mdm Ling Bakery is welcoming the Year of the Pig with its limited-edition Chinese Zodiac Auspicious Cookies Collection (\$128 per set) — comprising 12 gold-hued "barrels" of Chinese New Year goodies which come with fun symbolic meanings that correspond with each zodiac animal. Available for sale till Feb 4, while stocks last. Visit mdmlingbakery.com or call 8787-4142 for orders and enquiries.

Prosperity treats

Usher in the Year of the Pig with an abundance of prosperity snacks from Cold Storage. From traditional treats to contemporary favourites, let your guests indulge in classics such as the Nyonya Love Letter from Espine, a delicate, flaky treat with a rich coconut flavour. Aside from New Year staples, surprise your guests with Kit Kat Cookies and Cream share-bag, banded with Disney-themed festive tins.



Italian feast



Nestled by the Singapore River, Grissini at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel is a contemporary Italian grill restaurant that specialises in premium meats and seafood. On Jan 31, indulge in a delectable five-course menu, specially crafted by head chef Mirko Vinci, accompanied by the wines of Sicilia and Toscana. Call 6319-4038 or visit gustoitaliano.com.sg for reservations.



The poly route

This month, Normal Academic student graduates can participate in the Polytechnic Foundation Program Admissions Exercise (PFP). Republic Polytechnic (RP) is having its Open House From Jan 10 to 12. For parents with children considering the PFP, RP is extending a special invitation to its PFP Parents' Talk on Jan 12. With sharing sessions by PFP alumni and parents, and course counselling, parents will be able to understand more about this pathway at RP. To register, visit rp.edu.sg/pfp/parents-talk.



Time to revamp

From Jan 12 to 20 (noon to 10pm), head to Singapore Expo Hall 6A to enjoy great deals on furniture, curtains, floorings, mattresses, and anything else you might need for your abode, at the Home Inspirations 2019. There are more than 5,000 furniture designs and exclusive deals for BTO home owners. Get a free interior design consultation to join the grand draw and stand a chance to win \$10,688 cash. Visit poya-events.com for more details.



Tasty treasures

Skylight's original Royal Grande Abalone & Fragrant Chicken Treasure Pot is a tantalising gastronomic gem of superior abalone, dried mushroom, other premium ingredients and succulent chicken drumstick. The dish from the three-time World Branding Awards winner is sure to be the auspicious highlight of any festive celebration. Receive a free multi-purpose electric hotpot with every purchase. Available at petrol stations, supermarkets and hypermarkets.

COMING UP



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The Straits Times, Bon Voyage,
Jan 8



Singapore Motorshow
The New Paper, Jan 10



H+
The Straits Times and Lianhe
Zaobao, Jan 12

HOME IN FOCUS



Some of the butterfly kites, which weigh between 5g and 30g, that Mr Ong has made over the past eight years. Each one is painstakingly handmade and no two kites are the same. Every little aspect has to be taken into consideration during the kite-making process – from the thickness of the individual bamboo frame to the quality of the paper used.



At the dining table at his home where he usually works, Mr Ong carefully adds strokes of colour to the drawing of a butterfly as his six-year-old daughter Quinn watches intently. When his daughter was born in 2012, the kite-flying enthusiast decided to venture into miniature kites and indoor flying as he had less time to fly kites outdoors.

Flight of the butterfly



Mr Carlos Ong flying one of his aerial creations next to a neighbourhood community garden in Jurong West last November. His aim is to create a kite that is 10 times lighter and smaller than the ones he now makes. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG

Kite maker's miniature creations a showcase of aerodynamics and precise craftsmanship



Kua Chee Siong
Executive Photojournalist

When it comes to his passion, kite-flying enthusiast Carlos Ong likes to think small – miniature, in fact. Mr Ong, 45, not only flies kites, big and small, but also makes them – tiny ones that are not just decorative ornaments, but also aerodynamic wonders that can be flown.

His aerial creations are craftsmanship of the highest precision, with bamboo frames thinner than 0.5mm and the lightest weighing only 0.02g.

His unusual passion started nine years ago, when a colleague gave him a two-line kite as a birthday present. While he was familiar with single-line kites that he played with growing up in the kampung, a two-line version was something new.

Intrigued, the civil servant started to learn more about different types of kites from online videos. He spent his weekends flying kites at Marina Barrage, East Coast Park and West Coast Park, met other enthusiasts and fell in love with kite flying.

Mr Ong attended his first kite festival, in South Korea, where he exchanged knowledge with international kite flyers and learnt about different wind conditions and types of flying performance.

When his daughter was born in 2012, he had less time to fly his kites, so he decided to venture into miniature kites and indoor flying as a way of keeping his hobby alive.

He came across the videos of Taiwanese kite maker Sunny Lin and became transfixed: "How is he able to make miniature butterfly kites that look so real and fly like a real butterfly? How does he control his kites so skilfully?"

Mr Ong contacted Mr Lin through social media to find out more. With only basic pointers and tips, he tried to make his own miniature butterfly kites. "In the beginning, it was a 100 per cent failure rate. I made 10 kites and all failed."

But with the guidance of Mr Lin, who gradually shared more on the physics and aerodynamics of miniature kite creation, Mr Ong slowly improved. "Miniature kite making has trained my patience and concentration. One small mistake, and the kite will not fly," he says.

Every little aspect has to be taken into consideration – from the thickness of the individual bamboo frame to the quality of the paper used.

A perfect kite that can fly must be symmetrical and balanced, which explains why one can take up to a month or two to make.

The failure rate is also frustratingly high: Mr Ong has made over 50 kites but fewer than 10 are able to fly. His aim is to achieve the standard of his master, Mr Lin – creating a kite that is 10 times lighter and smaller than those he now makes. "The smaller the kite, the harder it is to make... It is like being a watch mechanic, everything is so detailed. You cannot miss out a single small component."

cskua@sph.com.sg

SCAN TO WATCH
The art of making miniature kites:
<http://str.sg/o6m4>



He adjusts the antenna of his butterfly kite during a flight test. He learnt the aerodynamics of miniature kite creation from Taiwanese kite maker Sunny Lin. Weight distribution and balance are key to ensuring a kite flies and glides well.



Mr Ong uses a cutter to slowly whittle down the bamboo strips to a satisfactory width and thickness. It takes him about a month or two to make a mini kite. He makes two at one go each time so that if one breaks under the multiple adjustments, he would have another as spare.



The kite maker uses a mini wood plane to further whittle down the bamboo strips to the desired width and thickness. Bamboo is used to create the skeletal structure of the miniature kite as it is flexible and malleable. Even when filed into very fine strips, it does not break easily.



The materials and tools that Mr Ong employs to create a new butterfly kite. In order to achieve the objective of making a kite that can fly, both symmetry and precision in craftsmanship are important in ensuring that the kite is aerodynamic and can glide like a real butterfly.



He adds pins to shape the bamboo spines as the glue dries on the finished artwork of a butterfly. He uses calligraphy paper, which is "good for absorbing water", after having tried many different types of paper, some of which tear easily or lead to smudging when colour is applied.



Mr Ong constructs the body of a butterfly kite. He says miniature kite making has helped train his patience and concentration – "one small mistake, and the kite will not fly". Among the different mini kites that Mr Ong has made, he finds the butterfly ones the most challenging.

BEYOND OPEN HOUSE



Alternate pathways

How academic dreams can come true

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BEYOND OPEN HOUSE



Put your best foot forward

James Cook University's Pre-University Foundation programme gives you flexibility to pursue your passion and excel in your studies

Juggling lessons at Meridian Junior College and his training commitments as a Team Singapore athlete proved to be a challenge for Tan Xiang Tian. He opted to leave school in 2010 to focus on his sport, bagging a gold medal at the 2015 SEA Games, plus a gold and silver medal each at the World Wushu Championships that same year.

But his education journey did not come to an end there.

The 27-year-old enrolled in James Cook University's (JCU) Pre-University Foundation programme (PUF) in 2014.

The eight-month programme served as a bridge for Mr Tan, enabling him to segue seamlessly into his undergraduate studies in 2015 at the same university, where he is currently a Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) student.

Mr Tan shares more about his education journey and why choosing the JCU path was one of the best decisions of his life.

Was it a tough decision to stop pursuing your Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education A-levels just six months shy of graduation?

It was a struggle, but I did not see myself being able to perform well, so I chose an alternative route to enable me to focus on training for my wushu competitions.

How did you find out about PUF?

I found out by word of mouth. I wanted to enrol in a well-recognised and accredited university, and saw that the PUF programme was ideal because it bridged the gap to degree programmes while equipping me with the necessary academic skills.



How did JCU's learning support advisers help ease your transition from O-levels to university studies?

I faced difficulties adapting to professional writing styles, such as the APA (American Psychological Association) citation format. The lecturers made the transition smooth, thanks to their expert assistance in core subjects such as statistics and mathematics.

I was frequently submitting my written assignments for feedback, and would receive constructive comments as well as web links to enhance my learning.

Tell us why you enjoy your studies.

I find JCU's smaller class sizes and ideal lecturer-to-student ratios very helpful in improving communication and learning.

And thanks to the diverse culture in JCU, I'm always working and interacting with people from very different backgrounds. At a common courtyard, staff organise regular events such as live music and performances by the various cultural groups.

JCU also affords flexibility to students to defer their studies to take on longer internships or to train for competitions.

Has that made life a little less hectic for you?

This aspect definitely helped me juggle my schoolwork and competitions, such as the SEA Games and World University Games. As a sport, wushu requires stamina and concentration, so I need to train daily. Lectures usually last for about three hours on campus, so that gives me breathing room to study.

Why did you opt for psychological science?

I have always been intrigued by the science behind human behaviour, emotions, and thought. I want to connect better with people and in so doing, give back to society.

Previously, I took up a voluntary internship with Boys' Town Singapore to understand how what I study can be applied in a real setting.

When I graduate in June this year, I see myself working or doing research in the field of child psychology.

With the support of the Pre-University Foundation Programme at James Cook University, Tan Xiang Tian proves that academic and sporting excellence can go hand in hand.

PHOTO: JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY



The Polytechnic Foundation Programme helped Sonia Natasha Nair, who is now enrolled in a local university, ace her studies.

PHOTO: REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC

for one year. It also gave the 22-year-old a headstart on the biotechnology diploma she completed at RP three years later.

Today, she is an Arts and Social Sciences undergraduate at the National University of Singapore (NUS) majoring in sociology. She tells us about her education journey.

How do you feel about being in the Normal (Academic) stream?

I was never bothered by it — it was merely a route to take me where I wanted to go. PFP proves that even without O-levels, you can still choose a path to university that aligns with your interests. RP's highly-interactive, problem-based learning style also allowed me to grow at a faster pace.

Why did you study biotechnology and now, the social sciences?

As someone passionate about human biology, I found the biotechnology course at RP a good fit. During this time, I became curious about human interaction and the idea of human behaviour and society. This helped me decide to major in sociology at NUS.

How did your polytechnic education prepare you for university life?

For my six-month-long final year project, I worked in collaboration with NUS on a diagnostic kit for diseases such as dengue, zika and chikungunya. My day-to-day collaborations with NUS staff and students helped me understand university life better. The project also helped me pick up task management and pitching skills, which will prove invaluable in my university studies.

What are your thoughts on having taken a slightly longer route to success?

I feel accomplished, and hope others will see that there are options beyond the conventional O-level paths to get into a local university.

To find out more about the PFP options available at Republic Polytechnic, visit www.rp.edu.sg/pfp.

Reaching for her goals

Sonia Natasha Nair leveraged her Normal (Academic) qualifications to pursue her love for science

From a young age, Sonia Natasha Nair had wanted to go to university. But unlike some of her Normal (Academic) stream peers who opted for the junior college channel, she chose a different route.

With her Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (GCE) Normal (Academic) results, she enrolled in Republic Polytechnic (RP) through the Polytechnic Foundation Programme (PFP). This allows Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) students to pursue their desired course in a practice-oriented learning environment

A special invitation for parents of 'N'-Level graduates

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Hear from our Graduates



Cheong Shi Hui
 Diploma in Environmental Science
 PFP 2013/2014
 Currently studying at NUS
 Alumna of Jurong West Secondary School

“PFP has laid solid foundation for me to do well in my subsequent three years in RP. More than that, RP prepare me well for my university education. Some of the content taught at university was what I had learnt in RP, but in greater depth and intensity.”



S Hari Vishnu
 Diploma in Aerospace Avionics
 PFP 2014/2015
 Currently serving National Service
 Alumna of Yishun Secondary School

“Being eligible for PFP, I saw this as an opportunity to obtain a place in the diploma I wanted. RP's PFP helped me not only adjust to the polytechnic life, but also do well in my subsequent years.”



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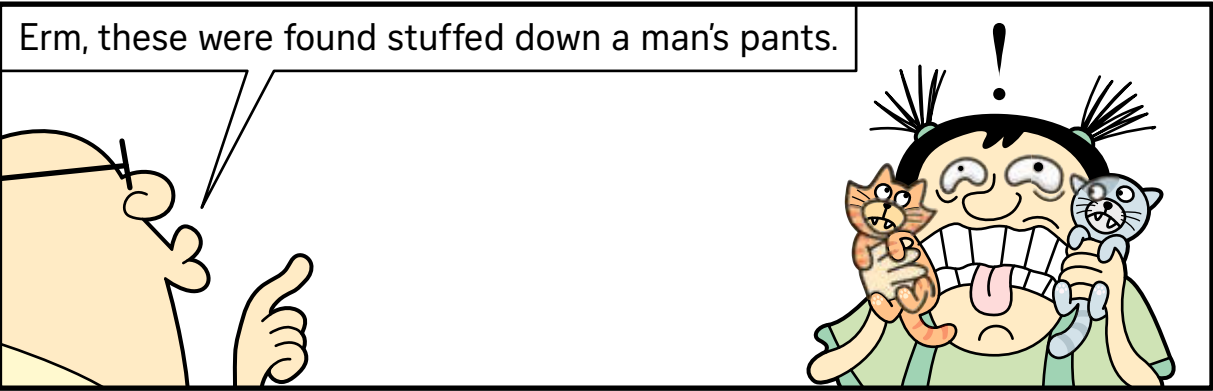
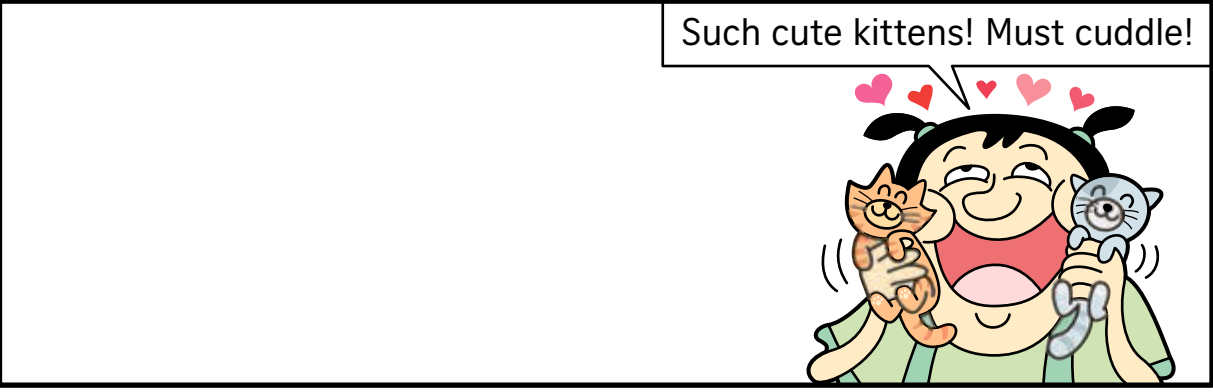
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FORUM

deedhan's TAKE



Kitten smuggler caught at Tuas Checkpoint

Talk to people on the ground to find sound solutions

While it is heartening to see that Singaporeans are offering their opinions and solutions to problems, especially for social and educational issues, these solutions may differ greatly among people probably because some deduce causes from personal experience while others base them on statistics and research carried out.

For example, the Direct School Admission (DSA) scheme was introduced based on the perceived advantages of certain schools or the Integrated Programme by some Singaporeans.

But Madam Chong Sze Kah pointed out that students in the DSA scheme can be negatively affected by the programme (Time to relook DSA scheme; Jan 2).

If the views of teachers in IP schools were sought to anticipate problems that DSA students might face, then the scheme might not have been introduced at all, despite

it being suggested by members of the public.

Currently, statistics show that students from the lowest-income group are congregated in schools with the poorest academic results.

Such statistics can be used to support perceived causes of social inequality, resulting in ineffective solutions to the problem.

In order to implement realistic and suitable solutions to uplift the social status of students from poorer homes, it is wise to conduct discussions with people in direct contact with such students, like social workers, instead of reacting immediately to suggestions from the educated public.

Although everyone has good intentions in contributing their opinions and suggestions, sometimes, ideas based on experience may work better than simply well-articulated ones.

Yeo Boon Eng (Ms)

Important to drill down to causes of modern-day terrorism

In our efforts to counter terrorism more effectively, it may be helpful to examine its causes, especially in relation to its present day proliferation (The global threat forecast for 2019; Jan 1).

The United States-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq early in the 21st century have gravely destabilised the Middle East, unwittingly turning such lands into fertile grounds for the growth of extremist organisations.

What is it that makes one vulnerable to radicalisation? Is it inequality? Is it injustice? Is it an unaddressed festering sense of disenchantment and disgruntlement?

In South-east Asia, more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees have fled violence and persecution in Myanmar. In their desperation, they could prove to be prime recruiting targets for terrorist groups.

The West has birthed its own terrorist groups, from the Red Army Faction in Germany to the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland.

Racism and nationalism, under the guise of patriotism, have also been used to incite tension between different groups of people in the US.

Singapore will one day find itself facing a terrorist attack. As unnerving as it may sound, it is the resilience and unity of our people that will determine how quickly the nation can return to normalcy.

Equipping ourselves with knowledge on what to do prior, during and after an attack will be key in such stabilisation endeavours.

Lily Ong (Madam)

Mental health: Insurers need to keep up with the times

The campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues during World Mental Health Day last October was effective, as Singaporeans are now not just more aware of the importance of mental health and illnesses, but also understand better the struggles and problems that people who suffer from mental illnesses face (More seeking help amid push to raise mental health awareness; Oct 15, 2018).

However, I would like to address

how most insurance companies do not allow people who are diagnosed with mental health problems to claim for their hospitalisation bills.

I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety at the age of 15. And like anyone who has been diagnosed with a mental illness in Singapore, I was denied hospitalisation insurance.

From an insurance underwriter's point of view, people who have a mental health condition, even if a

doctor has certified that the condition is under control, are seen as ticking time bombs.

According to them, such people are potentially unable to take care of themselves properly, thus leading to poor eating habits, poor health, alcoholism and other such problems.

Being unable to apply for private hospitalisation insurance just because of a previous record of mental illness only strengthens the

stigma as people with mental health conditions are seen as second-class citizens who are unable to take care of themselves or be functional members of society.

The other issue that needs to be addressed is employability.

Employers similarly view those who have a record of mental illness as ticking time bombs too. Almost all the people I know with a record of a mental illness, myself included,

choose not to disclose their mental health history during job interviews because they know that they will be rejected because of it.

Employers have to be educated and know that just because one suffers from mental health problems does not mean that he cannot contribute to the company just like any other employee.

With the increase in cases of mental health illnesses worldwide, Singapore's insurance industry and employers have to keep up with the times.

Lim Yufan

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Cast your vote now at

str.sg/soty18vote

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Harbhajan Singh The veteran nurse led a team of more than 100 nurses in the 2003 fight against Sars, the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Today, at the age of 78, Harbhajan Singh continues to work at the very hospital he first joined as a young man aged 25.	Annabelle Kwok At 26, NeuralBay founder Annabelle Kwok has already made her mark in artificial intelligence. She also wears many other hats as mathematician, hardware hacker, sportswoman, arts performer and do-gooder.	Teo Yee Ming Hai Sing Catholic School teacher Teo Yee Ming has led the school's robotics team from obscurity to success on the world stage. The school team has won the world's most prestigious robotics competition four times.	Elizabeth Tan Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.	Bjorn Low From a small social enterprise, Bjorn Low's Edible Garden City is now a thriving business. It designs and builds food gardens, supplies greens to restaurants, and trains and employs people from vulnerable or marginalised segments.	Kenneth and Adeline Thong The Thongs not only open their house to young people without a roof over their heads to live in for free, but they also recreate a home within a house for them. Both left their jobs to be present in the lives of young people.
Siti Noor Mastura Siti Noor Mastura rose above childhood poverty and overcame the odds to launch two non-profit groups. One distributes halal groceries to the poor and the other promotes honest discussions between people of different faiths.	Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food For All In 2014, Nizar Mohamed Shariff set up Free Food For All, a charity that provides free cooked meals for the needy. The charity cooks up to 100,000 meals a year for 3,000 elderly or low-income residents living in rental flats.	Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.	Teo You Yenn Sociology researcher Teo You Yenn published a book of essays on the lives of people who live in HDB rental flats. This Is What Inequality Looks Like is a bestseller that has sparked a national conversation on socio-economic inequality in Singapore.	Robert Chew Robert Chew, 69, has donated blood a total of 184 times. He started when he was 18 years old and donates blood three to four times a year. He has drained his body of blood 18 times over his lifetime as a donor.	

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Don't entertain debate if solution is working

It does not surprise me that there is renewed debate on the mynah issue following the report on the "roost net" test to remove birds (Major intervention to tackle mynah issue, Dec 29, 2018; Everyone has part to play in tackling mynah issue, by Mr Andrew Seow Chwee Guan, Jan 1; Is euthanising birds the only solution?, by Mr Ramamurthy Mahesh Kumar, Jan 2; and Here's to a more compassionate society,

by Mr Subramaniam Jayavelu, Jan 2). I have been living in the same high-rise apartment for the past 25 years, and I can attest to the differences the explosion in the mynah population has brought. Years ago, I used to be able to hear the chirps of a variety of birds indigenous to Singapore, including a variety of sunbirds as well as the kingfisher, the mangrove whistler and the mangrove flycatcher, early

in the morning. These days, with the explosion in the population of the Javan mynah species, I am able to hear only the mynah chirping. Additionally, as there are more mynahs now, the competition for food is much higher and my neighbours and I also have had to endure birds flying into our kitchens – a problem we never had in the past. If a huge imbalance in population

is leading to more problems, then we should tackle this issue in a decisive manner. Entertaining constant debate on any action taken will result in only paralysis and no improvements. The media has a role to play too. If a solution is working in solving a problem, the objections of a vocal minority should not be made to sound like they are the view of the majority. **Peh Chwee Hoe**

Saving two birds with one stone

Mr Ramamurthy Mahesh Kumar's letter brings a fresh perspective to the table (Is euthanising birds the only solution?, Jan 2). I do recall reading about the Javan mynah population edging out our local common mynah a couple of years ago (The Javan mynah: Today's pest, tomorrow's food?, April 22, 2016). Yet, for some reason, when my parents and I found a fallen and abandoned Javan mynah chick, we could not bring ourselves to just leave it there, alone and defenceless against its surrounding elements. We took it in last May and looked after it until it chose to leave some time around mid-December. Like overprotective parents, we did not think it was quite ready to

tackle living outdoors yet. So, like frantic parents, we put up posters of our missing mynah, and shared a post on Facebook. However, one of the responses to my Facebook post brought to my attention to the fact that the Javan mynah, while considered an invasive species here, is actually a protected species in its native country of Indonesia as a result of poaching (Pitch to use S'pore's Javan mynahs for 'rescue' act; Feb 3, 2017). This article made me wonder if "harvesting" members of the same species that have been introduced outside their native habitats, like researchers have suggested, could be a possible solution to the problems of two or more countries. **Marie Tan Kay Li Zoe (Miss)**

Aggressive drivers also cause problems

Mr Chow Hon Meng is painting an unfair picture by focusing on only cyclists' aggressive behaviour without holding drivers accountable for similar actions (Why are some cyclists aggressive on the roads?, Jan 3). In the incident in Pasir Ris on Dec 22, the lorry driver was also at fault for ramming the cyclist. And let's not forget the string of offences committed by the Ferrari driver who was jailed last year, which included obstructing

Orchard Road and verbally abusing a bus driver (Ferrari driver pleads guilty to obstructing traffic; July 17, 2018). For every video showing aggressive cyclists, there are many other clips out there showing aggressive drivers. While inconsiderate cyclists can cause inconvenience to drivers, behaving recklessly in response can end in tragedy. To put things in perspective, a driver involved in an accident with

a cyclist may lose a mirror or have his paintwork scratched. The cyclist, on the other hand, may lose a limb or even his life, as has happened before. At the end of the day, it is not just cyclists who need to remember to be considerate. We live in a crowded city, with roads that are meant to be shared. If everyone could show a little more courtesy, there would be fewer unnecessary incidents. **Tan Yi Shu**

Take tougher action against errant cyclists

The apparent increase in disputes between motorists and cyclists on Singapore roads is disconcerting. Cyclists often appeal to motorists to give them respect and space on the road but I have witnessed, on multiple occasions, cyclists who ride on the road until they reach a red light, then either beat the red light or turn into the pedestrian path. Such actions make it difficult for other road users to anticipate their actions and put themselves and

others at risk too. To cut down on such actions, I suggest that cyclists be subject to traffic laws similar to the ones that motorcyclists have to abide by. A system of fines and demerit points should also be put in place to discipline cyclists who break these laws. This would encourage safer and more responsible behaviour from cyclists, and make the roads safer for everyone. **Benjamin Puah**

VoicesOfYouth

More teachers like Madam Azlina

After reading about Madam Azlina Hassan hugging her pupils, all I could think of is that we need more teachers like her (Teck Whye Primary School teacher gives all her pupils their PSLE results with a warm hug; Nov 23, 2018). Being a teacher is not just about presenting facts and methods to students. Teachers in the 21st century should strive to build a rapport with students too. Personal engagement is especially crucial in primary school as pupils are in the critical stage of forming their values. I hope that all teachers are able to connect with their students, give them the encouragement they need and be positive role models. **Hai Oufan**, 17 Junior College Year 1 student

No need to worry about 4G leadership

The process of leadership renewal in Singapore does not happen overnight. Current leaders slowly expose younger

leaders to more responsibilities over time, allowing them to adapt to the heavy load of taking Singapore forward, instead of throwing them into the deep end, where any mistake made would have serious consequences. Singapore's method of leadership renewal has already proved its worth twice, with transitions spanning four decades. Thus, one might even call it foolproof, and Singaporeans should have no reason to worry about the fourth-generation leadership. **Torance Tan Ying Liang**, 14 Secondary 2 student

Put more effort into climate change fight

It is heartening to see more people stepping up to fight against climate change. Last year, Starbucks announced that it would phase out plastic straws worldwide by 2020, projecting to eliminate more than one billion plastic straws a year. Besides just counting on larger organisations to play their part, we need to change the habits of individual people too.

On a macro scale, we require greater political will and closer international relationships. It is impossible for one country to work alone to alleviate a world problem. While many pacts, such as the Copenhagen Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol, have been signed, these are still not enough to combat climate change as commitment and cooperation from many countries are still lacking. With greater effort put in by people, we will be able to slow down the progress of climate change and try to reverse its effects before they become worse. **Felicia Lee**, 16 Secondary 4 student

CALLING YOUNG READERS: If you are a student or aged 21 years or below, and want to air your opinion on any report or letter in The Straits Times, e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg, with the subject header "Voices of Youth". Do include your age, school level and contact details, and the headline of the report/letter you refer to. Please keep to a length of 250 words.

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Capturing life in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh were The Straits Times' associate editor Rahul Pathak (left), artist Pradip Kumar Sikdar (middle), and executive photojournalist Kua Chee Siong. The ST team spent nine days in the Rohingya camps in July 2018.



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A big festive draw

A lion dance in McCallum Street on Feb 7, 1954, featuring big-headed dolls which were a big draw for many, especially children. Chinese New Year fell on Feb 3 in the Year of the Wood Horse.

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